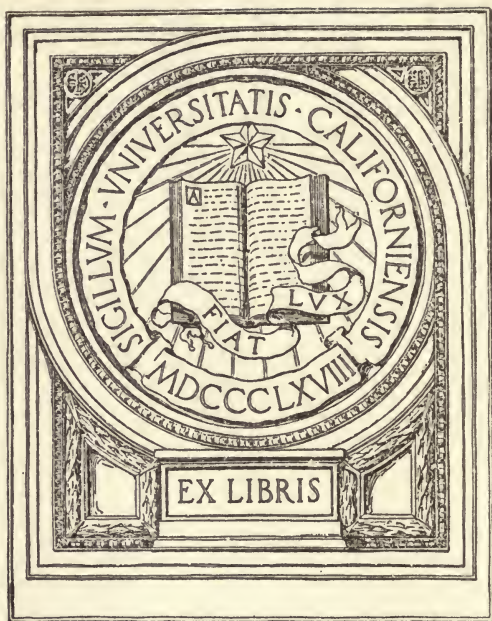




The HEART of the LAST FRONTIER

Ernest Everhart Baker



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**THE HEART OF THE LAST FRONTIER
AND OTHER VERSES**

Celestial longings, surgings unexpressed,
Old lays, forgotten in the passing of the years,
Dust of dead thoughts, the salt of passioned tears,
Burning as lava on a naked breast,
Love, hope, and joy divine—
These things are mine;
Wherewith in solitude I scan
And by my lonely watchfires sing,
Yearning to know, What is this thing—
This rag-doll thing—we call a man?

The
Heart of the Last Frontier
and
Other Verses

BY
ERNEST EVERHART BAKER



WITH COVER DESIGN BY THE AUTHOR

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By

ERNEST EVERHART BAKER

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Could I but sing into my rhyme
A creed of life which men would find,
Fitting and true to every time,
When struggle-weary hearts grow blind
Beneath the blows time dares to give,
Laughing that man desires to live—
Could I but say, for every day,
The prologue of a merry lay,
Whose player would in glee impute
A fonder chanson to his lute—
My song should feel itself at most
Well-worthy of the smiling host
Who dared to say for me betimes:
A rhymester lived, whose merry rhymes
Lifted the heart of man above
The cares of life, and let him love—
Led him afar from his ancient ways,
Where glory allured with its smiling blaze,
Led him away from the creeds of old,
Where the altar-smokes of faith were cold,
And the hopes of life were put to rout
By the harrying legions of dread and doubt,
To the gaily of a new-found shrine
Where he might dream for one divine,
Sweet moment, free from every care,
Finding a sacred solace there,
Till his listless heart went fancy-free
In the purple wines of Poesy—
Could I but say—
Man's heart each day
Would smile upon these kindly things,
And say, "Have peace—a poet sings!"

To those three comrades of my yesteryears, whose
unfailing hope, courage, affection and fellow-
ship scattered rays o' sunshine over the foot-
hills along my trail to the passes and uplands
o' the Last Frontier; and to that unforgotten
Other, who journeyed not, but lies in a bask
o' primrose by the wayside.

PREFACE

Take, if you will, these orphans of my whim,
Dear dreams of prisoned years, when youth was mine,
Said to my wistful soul, when day grew dim,
Ere slumber bade my reveries resign.

In fancy, I have wandered far and near,
Questing these tender songs you might desire,
Singing them over to a yearning ear:
The troubled droonsongs of my fretful lyre.

A little Dust of Diamonds on a shore!—
A passing tide will wash them out to sea!
Yet irks me little what reward in store,
If I have taught you what was truth to me.

Gay have I sung them to my lonely heart,
Loving their fancied music well and true!—
Take them, dear Comrades, take them, as we part:
I gave my youth to buy these songs for you.

PRELUDE

If, as I lude these lays of grief and rapture,
Some lone heart hear me in his bleak despair,
Grant with my symphony his cares I capture,
Where I may chance to chant a gipsy air.

Grant that some wanderer, some vagrant rover,
May pause to revel, some blithe chord to scan—
Grant he may stay, repeating fondly over,
Some echo of the brotherhood of man.

Some strain, remote, in tawdry texture hidden,
A glow-worm truth that glimmers from the dark,
And guides his soul, a guest contritely bidden,
To rise and greet the rapture of the lark.

Grant, as I sing, my interlude of pleasure
May touch some heartstring and resound anew,
Lifting that bosom to a stately measure—
And I have made the song I wished for you.

THE HEART OF THE LAST FRONTIER

My firelight flames and darkens, the drifting smokes arise,
The shadows coil about me, and many a wood-spark flies;
While amidst their glaring signals gentle visions reappear,
In fanciful remembrance of the Last Frontier.

The livid tongues of purple like impish Titans leap,
Awakening my fancies with visions long asleep;
And like the pyre before me, where elf-things play of nights,
The watchfires of my memory reflare with dead delights.

The portraits on the mantel seem to catch a gleam of gold,
Reminding me of dear ones I loved in times of old,
And I meet in reminiscence those friends of yesteryear
Along the romance-road that finds the Last Frontier.

I find them in the passes, where we were wont to meet;
We drink among the taverns, and our cups are very sweet;
We track along the foothills, and our revelries are gay;
And around our winter nightfires we lift our merry lay.

They pass review in dim array, their faces lit with smiles,
Grip hands with mine in comradeship a dream of old beguiles,
Converse with me of ancient joys, of fellowships sincere,
And the failure, toil, and glory of days of yesteryear.

Yet still it seems among them all I found no friend who stuck:
They always were a restless sort, their friendship was but luck:
They always found another trail, and followed where it led;
And where we might have come to friends we broke the bonds,
instead.

As I gaze upon the mantel, at the portraits peering there,
Their tender, loving features seem to burn me with despair;—
Yet, as I linger on the scene, some stray face to recall,
There comes to me a friendly soul, more dear to me than all.

He rises from the firelight, that flickers on the log :
He puts his nose between my knees, that habit of a dog :
It seems to me he almost speaks—I think he understands—
I pat his head—he brightens—he licks my broken hands.

O comrades of the yesteryears, my fire is dying low !
Come, fellow ; can't you hear me ? The shadows come and go.
He whines and whimpers at my feet, the friend I hold most
dear :
O comrades, it is lonely on the Last Frontier.

LOOKING OUT FOR PAY

I see men everywhere around who never find the dirt :
They whine if things are not to suit ; they whimper if things hurt ;
They seem to only drift and dream, and oh ! the tale is old :
They only pan the utter dross, though everywhere is gold.

Now life is one big prospect, and surely not so much
The matter of a choice of claims as digging them, and such.
I think the man who does his best at everything he tries
Is, after all, the only one who ever wins the prize.

And so I like the man who smiles, nor heeds much what his lot,
No matter what his claim may be, if fortune smiles, or not ;
Who always plays the better part, and lifts a song in glee,
And pans the placers of his soul, and finds them rich and free.

I think if men would live their lives along the open road,
And lend a gentle word of cheer, and tote their share of load,
Nor loiter much to whimper if the diggings most was clay,
Life would not show a streak of dirt that did not carry pay.

WHERE THE OREGON EAGLE CRIES

When your toils are done, and the setting sun
Grows dim at the end of your trail,
And you ponder the worth of the prize you have won,
And you long to tell over your tale;
And you yearn for a spot where the burn and the blot
Will fade in the boundless skies—
Come, drink joy's wine from the Gods' own pot,
Where the Oregon eagle cries.

For the thrushes sing by the purple spring
With music that croons in the dale;
And your bosom may wrest from the sorrows that sting,
And be free from the burdens that ail.
In the silvery trees by the silvery seas
With the silvery surge that sighs,
Your heart may awaken to rapture's ease,
Where the Oregon eagle cries.

With a trail to take and a jest at stake,
And a shimmering river to sail,
You can turn to the pleasure for pleasure's own sake,
In a land where no pleasure can fail.
If you long for the wild and the peace of a child,
And a revel that dwindles nor dies,
Come to a realm where no care's beguiled,
Where the Oregon eagle cries.

For a laugh may lift, and a dream may drift,
A lyric may lilt in the vale,
And a ripple may ring, and a shadow may sift,
But a sorrow need never assail.
If your journey is run and your quest has been won,
You will rest and forget your sighs
In a golden sun, when the day is done,
Where the Oregon eagle cries.

A LILY OF ASSINIBOINE

If you like a little story with a sprinkling of shame,
Of a man whose heart is lonely with a grief that knows no name,
Come with me to Athabaska, where the skies are blue above,
To the solitary valley, where the factor found his love.

Lavoyne had come from Montreal, where women made men fret,
To find the freedom of the wilds, and—if he could—forget;
And the voyageurs had wondered why he tarried in the land—
But only one in Montreal—who knew—could understand.

Of nights, the Cree would hear him, when the moon was in the
rills,
As, borne upon the whining winds, his voice came through the
hills;
And they bore with them a legend of a spirit on the trails,
That sang of Old Dominion where the lurking panther wails.

And there is yet another tale they tell along the pass,
Of one whose trail could know no turn, and led into the vast;
And the legend seems to tell us that she followed to its end,
And found a lonely valley, and a man no man called friend.

Lavoyne had met her at the Post, one howling winter day:
A choking gust was on the trail, and she had lost her way;
And amid the glaring riot and the tumult of the place
His mind had set to wondering if he had not seen the face.

And something in her manner seemed to draw him unawares,
As if, perhaps, a lonely life, and broken hopes, and cares,
Had awakened her to sympathy, where others might intrude;
And so he told her why he came to live in solitude.

'Twas not a pretty story; but Lavoyne had caught her eye—
"You call to mind a sweetheart," he was saying, "times gone by;
But she left me for another," and he leaned upon the bar,
And told them there the story of a man who wore a scar.

“You see, he stole her heart away, and stained her with his wine,
And led her off among the lights, this lily who was mine;
So I lost the dreams I’d cherished, and by heart was torn and
sore:
I went and found another, though I loved my lily more.

“And then he won this other, and she turned me from her door;
She curtained dark her window, and her light was mine no more;
So I vowed an ancient reckoning: to blight him, and to mar,
And hunted him, and branded him, and left him with a scar.

“ ’Twas in the merry tavern, there in Montreal, one night.
Outside the snow was fury, but the room was blind with light;
And I saw a rouge madonna at a table in the place,
A lily at her bosom, and the paint upon her face.

“I looked, and saw her laughing, though I did not catch her eye:
She turned her head away from me, as one who would defy;
But between the glowing vistas, as I drank upon a stair,
I saw this man beside her, at a table, drinking there:

“ ‘To Britain: health, forever!’ But before the toast was said,
I reeled him with my goblet, and his face ran streaming-red;
But I did not heed nor tarry, only moved along the floor,
Across the crowded barroom, stepped outside, and closed the
door.

“And so I lost the game of love, where others play and win.
My heart was tired; I hated things—the wine, the lights, and sin;
So I came away and left it all, and came among the Cree—
But I often see her smiling, and I think she calls to me.

“Behind her in the shadows is a man upon his knees.
He staggers like a madman—he is lost among the trees;
And the trail is like a puzzle; and he gropes, too tired to see,
Among the lonely passes of the frontier of the Cree.”

The Post was strangely silent, but the wind outside was wild,
As if a thousand wolves were there, and whining like a child;
But Lavoyne was only gazing at a portrait on a shelf—
His guest cried on a table, for she knew it was herself.

“To Britain: health, forever!” She was standing by Lavoyne.
He started, paled—stepped backward: “You, at far Assiniboine!”
Out of doors, the wind was shouting, hoarse, as if its throat was
dry—

It seemed toward the threshold they could hear a sled go by.

Lavoyne was white and quivering—why it was she never knew.
She was watching him in silence, and the wind outside that blew
Was a lurching drunken Titan as a hand threw wide the door,
And a frosted figure tumbled in, and sank upon the floor.

Lavoyne tore off its parka: “God! that man!” he heard her say.
She tottered to his bosom—like a helpless thing she lay;
And Lavoyne looked drawn and jaded, and he staggered to the
bar,

For lying there upon the floor was the fellow with a scar.

“In Montreal, I loved you,” said Lavoyne, his vision red.
“And I loved you,” she whispered; but she only hung her head;
And Lavoyne clasped close a lily whom the sin would stain no
more—
But the life was gone forever from the man upon the floor.

On the lonely Athabaska, where the skies are blue above,
Men renounce a braver reason for the cowardice of love,
And it seems to be the proverb love will find its way alone:
And the merry hearts of Britain guard Her loves to find their
own.

WANDER SONG

Oh I sang me down the valley, when the dawn was all a glory,
And the hills were full of laughter, as the wind sang in the trees;
For the joy of youth was in me, and I longed to know its story,
And I yearned to wing a journey on the pinions of the breeze.

As my lyre of life unburdened, trembling fondly in my fingers,
Mine was promise-song eternal: there was gladness in my breast:
Like the joy of summer evenings, when the scarlet sunset lingers,
Ere the darkness veils the gloaming at the bosom of the West.

It was tender joy within me, and the jests of mirth that flourished,
That was pleading low, and calling me to find a life more free;
It was weariness of bondage toil and bitterness had nourished
That appalled me, and had stretched its all-adoring arms to me.

Was it up the trails I wandered, was it down the dells I revelled,
It was freedom that was calling: it was hope that rent the bond;
It was loneliness that lured me, where the giant peaks were bevelled:
It was hunger for the summits, and the plains that lay beyond.

PARENTAGE

Through the hazy mist of ages man has dreamed himself a past,
When beside the night-long campfire, he has toasted toes and gassed;
And anon throughout the vistas of the future of the race,
Woman pops the proper issues, and propitiates the pace.

In some geologic darkness, 'neath the grime of years that pass,
Human bones, encaved and crumbling, grasp the omnipresent glass;
And surely everyone of us in moulding would be curled
If the women by the campfires had not ruled a willing world.

THE TRAIL TO GIBBET

When a red-eyed moon is peering at your cabin in the clearing,
And a shaft of silver spatters in the moosehide on the floor,
And your merry hearthfire's gleaming, while your heart is dreaming,
dreaming,

In some happy thought that's flitted through your memory just
before;

To your mind comes swiftly fleeting something sad beyond repeating,
And you sit in wan submission as the merry visions play,
Till you wake forgotten revels while the wind wails down the levels,
And you dream on lonely nightfires that have burned along your
way.

So you fare those olden journeys, face the foil in ancient tourneys,
Grip your hilt in vanished conflict with your long-forgotten foe;
Meet anew dire dead disasters, greet once more now-tongueless mas-
ters—

Lay your cloaks of pride before them that they trample as they go—
Cringe beneath them, shorn of splendor;—swift your palsied dreams
grow tender—

Now you toil in blear obeisance, heeding meek an old command;
Hear again the voice of vastness calling you to find the fastness,
And the luring trails new-beckon you to seek a far-off land.

Like a toper, blindly reeling, from the stews you soon go stealing:
Men ignore you—friends forget you—no one seems to care, or mind.
You are down and out, a vassal, banished, exiled from life castle—
With a sad forlornly rue you leave the moated grange behind.
Now and then you turn to linger on the scene and with your finger
Point along the game of failure where you might have won the
cast;—

But a dream is all that's left you, and a trail no man has cleft you—
So, a vagabond of dreams, you go dim-journeying from the past.

Far from life's gay-sparkling rallies swift you seek untroubled valleys,
Roaming silent to fair uplands by the trails no man has made;

Overhead, a starling guides you ; all-around the shadow hides you,
But you journey ever onward and your heart is not afraid.
So in reminiscence often, olden battle-rigors soften,
And your rippling blood awakens fallen fancies with its mirth ;
For you've found the game, and played it, sensed the conflict and
 essayed it—
Lost ! But, God be praised ! you paid it with the cost the quest was
 worth.

But it's not to fail that burns you as the dismal thought that turns you
 To the one whose heart was wafted on the pinions of your hope ;
And it's not that you have lost her as the bitterness it cost her
 And the hungry hearted loneliness through which her life must
 grope.
And it's not to fall that breaks you as the tortured grief that takes
 you
 To the comfort of a fancy and a memory of her call ;—
Yea, though bitter be your failing, yet her treasured love comes
 veiling,
 Veiling dim, and ever dimmer, what is destined to us all.

So the moonlight in the clearing, saddening, blighting, endearing,
 Flames anew the olden campfires by dim trails old memories tread ;
When upon some portrait staring, where the crimson hearthfire's
 flaring,
 Something wakes your tender fancy to a love you once have said.
Swift into your spirit burning sifts a sudden, saddening yearning,
 While the lava wines of childhood thrill the frosted blood of age ;
And you lonely, sadly ponder on the loving portrait yonder,
 Till the tears of dim forgetfulness wash clean your memory's page.

THE SPELL OF THE UPLANDS

They grip you by the heart, and hold you hard,
Like talons, clutching to their bleeding prey.
They bond you like a link a smith has scarred,
Forged white-hot in your breast of throbbing clay.
They hold you like the hasp of mighty claws,
The panther's gnash, the viper's wincing clasp.
They brule you like a marling bruin's maws:
Strive though you will, you cannot break their grasp.

Depart from them, they make your heart seem void.
Remain away, they gnaw you like a rat.
They cling to you like soft lips, lover-cloyed:
You cringe and yield, as moth unto the ghat.
So have they lain, and bathed in yellow sun,
Forsaken, blasted, worn by wind and age,
Luring men's hearts since first was time begun:
So shall they lure, till time unrolls its page.

DELUSION

Ah, that was death, we thought—
Forsaking youth, and leaving it behind us—
Forgetting what it held of dreams and sorceries,
And reckless even age should hold no care—
Forgetting loves beneath the moon, we knew,
And every unspent sorrow that we bore
In childish innocence, and strove to bury
In the bosom of the silent hills!
Ah, that was death, we thought!
How strange to say we even thought, those happy days.

THE MAN FROM KEG

I meets him in the tavern: he is standing on his peg.
His real name is McTavish, but his cognomen is Sneg:
He will rob a shrouded spirit, this gentleman from Keg.

I am loafing at the bar in the LITTLE POLAR STAR,
And he looks a full-grown moon from drink or feed;
So I pours him off some scum, and he gulps it, meek and dumb,
And remarks, "I guess a drink is what I need!"

"I'm McTavish Sneg," says he; "But they calls me 'Sneg McT'."
And I sees he's plumb gone dippy as a louse;
Which his faults is great and small, and he tells 'em in a drawl,
As he orders up the drinks for all the house.

Now McTavish isn't rich, but he has a gnawing itch
For to see his bit of color, and the lights;
So he opens up his pack: which he blossoms with a sack;
Then he lugs me down the street to see the sights.

Well, the air is full of sleet: we gets wet from head to feet!
"Did you ever steal?" he says to me, "or beg?"
And his eyes is like a blade, so I nods, and looks afraid,
For says he, "I robbed a grave once, back in Keg."

"Sneg, you're rather rough," says I—but he heaves a happy sigh!
Then we drags up to a halt outside a door:
"FORTUNE TELLER: ENTER HERE," says a banner fit to smear;
So we sluices in and thumps across the floor.

Which the gentleman within, who is scrawny-like and thin,
Has the haggles over prices, and the like;
And McTavish, sort of rash, whisks the fellow out the sash,
Where he settles in a trashpile, on a spike.

“You be Oracle!” says Sneg; and he chucks me with his leg,
And he makes me wear the robes, and be the Prof’.
So McTavish takes their dust, while I peddles out the crust;
And we starts the matinay performance off.

Well, in comes a ’dough in mucks, and he squats down, big as ducks,
So I starts the trancing-game, and throws a fit;
But I nearly throws to stay, though I gets up nerve to say:
“Fortune waits you when the bluebird starts to twit.”

I am watching of his eye; Sneg is peeking on the sly;
But the ’dough is soft and dreamy as a lamb;
As I scoops him up the feed, while he downs it hull-and-seed;
And McTavish smiles at what a seer I am.

Which my talk is keen and shrewd: “When you stumble on a dude,
With a silver cobweb trailing on his hat,
It is sure a certain sign that your fortune sprouts a spine,
And is going to be a leap-frog after that.”

Then the ’dough, he sighs some more, but he picks up off the floor,
And kashoots a bag of dust into my lap;
And he seems to have no doubt, as he starts to dwindle out,
With, says he: “You shore are some magician, Cap’!”

Well, I sees McTavish spring on the ’dough, and give a swing,
And he has our recent subject in a wink;
Which he flops him on the rug, and he prowls him, clean, and snug,
And kawhoops him out the sash to cool and think.

I can see McTavish smile, but I sure despise his style,
Though I sort of grips my teeth, and keeps my huff;
But he sniffles some, and grins, and is doubling up his fins,
When I cautions him, “Come, Sneg, dear, not too rough!”

Then McTavish sort of hums; so I knuckles up my thumbs,
And betakes my opportunity to rise;
Which I ups, and on my hips, and intrudes him on the lips,
And I bulges in and pickles up his eyes.

I am like a gentle storm, and my feelings sure is warm,
For McTavish says, "You're rather rough," says he;
And I surely must confess that this McTavish is a mess;
But I does the same before he does to me.

I rips his shirt to pieces, and I spoils his wooden leg.
I mauls him plumb to smithers, all except the name of Sneg:
He never likes me afterward, this gentleman from Keg.

EQUALITY

Each pale, pretenseful prince
On royal highroad set
Exults in fatal ignorance
That might be joy, and yet
Is surest retrogression to the lifeless loveless dust.—
And men are filled with bitterness, for bitterness is just.

And men who fears have known
On tawdry byways gone
Fare sober, restless and alone
From dusk to sturdy dawn
And view the errant character of all men with regret,—
And if they felt a bitterness, that were but justice yet.

For song and jest and travesty
Dear hopes, like dreams, that died,
Ambition, joy, and ecstasy
Must vanish side by side;
And prince and pauper follow them and crumble into dust.—
And men are filled with bitterness, for bitterness is just.

HILL-BORN

I grew up in the quiet hills, a solitary child.
I learned to love the drooping pines, and all that haunts the wild;
And came to know the woodcraft of all the hidden rills,
That goes to make a greater thing: the spirit of the hills.

And something in the solitudes has led me far and near.
Of evenings when the moon was low and the mountain-air was clear,
I've loitered on the gleaming heights that look on many a space
And drunk in all the poetry of Nature's roughened wastes.

I've wandered in the passes, while the snows lay shoulder-deep,
When, under myriad winter-stars, the white earth lay asleep;
And, brooding there alone of nights, the country came to be
The very spot of all the earth the Gods had made for me.

I joy to hear the robin lisp his treble in the trees.
The sparrow and the mavis mock my inmost secrecies.
I know their errant whims and ways, and each one's gentle art:
Perhaps for this the hills have claimed dominion on my heart.

There's gold, they say, along the steeps; there's silver on the crests;
But more than these are mingled in the gorgeous crimson wests;
. Nor can all the precious galleries of museums remote
Boast a single pallet worthy of the poem Nature wrote.

I've lolled along the summits, when the hills were wet with dew,
As the tortured Gods of Morning scratched their bleeding fingers
through;
And the gore of night ebbed crimson down the wastes of cloven
field—
A druid rite of sacrifice on Nature's pagan shield.

I've roamed the dells at noonday, when the trilling thrush sang free,
And the sun blazed down the canyons, where the rills sang up to me—
I've strolled the cliffs at gloaming, when the sunfall slew the West,
And the evening's benediction waked a reverie in my breast.

And peering off across the land my hungry eye might glimpse
A wizard's hermitage of wastes, where ruled day's nameless imps,
That frolicked through the loneliness till day was tired and spent,
And bade me, watching on the brink, repose, and be content.

The tessellated columns, the vague, entrancing deeps,
The yawning purple chasms, where a thread of river creeps,
Have allured a thousand singers to their fascinating brinks,
Where the gay Gods brew their nectar, and the soul of Poet drinks.

Yet none could wrap in idle words the peace the rills enclose,
Nor wreath in futile sophistry the joy the hilltop knows:
It would have been a sacrilege to even try repeat—
Perhaps it is the silence seems to make the mountains sweet.

And death desires no burial more grand than in a glade
To crumble in the sepulchre the Titan hills have made,
Nor yearns profounder requiem than lonely winds that wail,
Nor rarer wreath or garland than a lily of the vale.

Nor could a future be so fond, nor destined realm so sweet,
As just to droon eternally, in reverence, at the feet
Of some great lofty mountain, which the Gods have built so high:
A pagan Nature worshipper, who did not fear to die.

The throng-enchanted cities, the treasure-seeking marts,
And all the merry places, very dear to human hearts,
Have conspired to rob the human of the peace the mountains bring;
And men are old at dawn of life, and never learn to sing.

Yet high upon the golden ridge a merry song may rise,
And man may mock his sorrow in the twilight of the skies,
Till the peace awakes his fancies by the fading sunset's glow,
And he dreams a dead past over that was vanished long ago.

Maybe you have not found the hills—then pray not tarry long,
Nor jest upon the burden of my aimless, idle song;
Lest sometime you should find yourself in love with them, you see,
And think the fault of loving them a sin to lay to me.

EPHEMERA

Time for an instant bare relents—
Permits to lovers love's idolatry,
To those who sing,
A city's merriments,
And a flush of moonlight on a momentary sea
Then sweeps the colors from its pallet, for time is king.

EPIGRAM

The world is apt to forget a benefactor,
Though it attach much reverence to his work.

BAGATELLES OF FATE

We weren't all born to be men of the hour,
Nor destined to stalk in the boots of a king,
Nor to pride gay arenas, where crowds fling their flower,
Bold themes for the poets to sing.

It wasn't ordained we should scale to a star
And pluck the wise owl of a moon by the beard,
Nor whirl through the clouds in a fanciful car,—
An elf of the wan and the weird.

We are mere bagatelles in the dice-box of chance,
And it makes little odds if we lose or we win;
But the question is, How did the fiddler dance?
That lives when our checks are cashed in.

Perhaps if we only would cling to the game
And play for the love and the joy of the thing,
Small reck would it be were it failure or fame!—
It's only the battle we sing.

Though fondly we toil with a hope in our quests,
Scant ever we scale to the heights and the mounts;
For fortune's a hermit, and jealous of guests!—
It's only the struggle that counts.

Aye, fortune is jealous yet ever he lures;
His quest is a track that the toiler must tread;
Nor cares he a whit if the victor endures
In memory after he's dead.

Ah, no! It's the manner of deeds we have wrought
And the words of good cheer and of hope that we gave—
It is only the kind of a battle we fought,
That lives when we sink to the grave.

THE GODS OF SMALL ALLEYS

Did ye ever loll and loiter on the bosom of a valley up the foothills to
the summits, when the budding spring was new,

Where the summer Gods lay waking in the smother of the ridges, and
the snowfurls spun their fury in a sack of wind that blew?

Did ye ever gaze down chasms, where a sun has never hidden, and the
shadow-tongues of noontime lapped the lyric of the rills,

Braving death in lonely passes, where the winds of winter harried,
when the scuttles of a tempest scraped the silence from the
hills?

Have ye sped through desolation, up a land forever brooding, where
the winds forlornly revel, and your dreams to death resign,

Roaming down the boundless open by the streams that urge and
waken, when the treachery of springtime sings of glory in the
pine?

Have ye gazed in wordless wonder at a land beyond expression, where
the tongues that strove to utter seemed a murmur of the lost?

Then ye know the turbid grandeur of the life the fates ordained us!
It is death, but it is freedom; lo, we joy to pay the cost!

We have tracked you down the open, when a trail was all ye left us,
when the gloaming was a phantom, and the day had never
shone;

We have yawned upon your campfires from the lordly blackened
barrens, when the world breathed summer-stillness and the
moon leered down alone;

We have mocked you from the uplands, when the deadened world
lay gleaming, and the jeweled stars were staring at the levels
of the snow;

We have laughed at storm and tempest; we have jeered at wind and
weather, running free in utmost valleys, where no trail had
dared to go.

Up the slopes, across the barrens, down the swales and screaming
rivers, snarling mad in bitter conflict, lest our fellows should
prevail,

From the tides that wet the seashores to the snows that blind the
summits, wailing out among the silences, where men have made
no trail.

Tracking up toward the Northland, when the summer is a glory,
slinking back toward the Southland, when the winter-bitterns
soar ;—

Lo, our law of life is written in the bleach-white bones that sparkle
from the grandeur of the summits to the sadness of the shore.

THE CUP OF BEAUTY

Two kings and a jester were sitting at wine,
At a table, remote in the court ;
And jollity reigned, that the kings might resign
Their desires to a bottle of Port.

“Ah, here’s to the wine, for the heart elates,
And lifts to the heavens on wings—
Aye! enters triumphant within the fair gates!”
Said a one of the jovial kings.

The jester was smiling ; the other king said,
“In a chalice, with wine to the brim,
I have sensed all the beauty thy heaven displayed!”
But the jester was laughing at him.

“What ho, sir, O jester?” cried the good kings, gored
At such conduct, contrary to rule—
“Ah, speaking of wine, sirs,” the jester man scored,
“When it takes us, we all seem the fool!”

IN THE MARKET PLACE

She had gamed with her soul, and lost;
But that was no fault of her own!
She had paid the pitiless cost
Fortune wrests from the girl that's alone!
But somehow the sins of her heart
Are common to me and to you,
And vanish alike in the comedy-part
Love plays, when its dreams come true.

We met in the market place,
And wandered a many a mile.
I looked in her tender face,
And she answered me with a smile.
She touched my glass, and my hand,
And the careless wisdom of wine
Sent love's old song to singing grand
Through these hungry veins of mine.

We scaled the sundown heights,
And the mist was a veil on the sea;
And over the waters the city's lights
Came smiling to her, and to me.
And the breakers sang their somber song,
And the dancers sang on the dune,
As we sat on the cliffs in a revel, long,
Under our regret's dead moon.

In the market, the lights were flame;
But the love in my breast was fire!
She was sorrowing with her shame,
Yet I was blithe with desire.
But I said: "At dawn, we must part!"
And she cried like a tortured thing;
And she lay on my breast with a broken heart,
Like a bird with a shattered wing.

And the night in the east came red ;
And the morn grew salt on our lips.
"It is dawning to grief," she said ;
And she wept for the harbor of ships :
"When they bear you away, I am sad,
For the market is lone, you know !"—
"Good-bye," I said—"In my love, I am glad ;
But in sorrow and love I go !"

And the tide was beginning to run,
But she clung like a child to me—
"I am going," I said, "with the sun,
To the arms of my mother, the sea !"
My love was as lava and fire ;
She was coy as a child at play—
"Good-bye," I said, "For the east is a pyre !"
And we parted at break of day.

At the pier, as the bark put by,
She was waving her hand to me ;
And a scarlet sun was in the sky,
And the dawn was a flame on the sea.
And the love was a flame in my breast,
But my lips were curved in a song :
"Good-bye !" I sang, "For the billows love best !"
"Good-bye ! you will not stay long ?"

And the sea mourns, bitter and mad,
And wails for a song of the shore ;
And often I long for the sad,
Sweet face that I see no more.
For she turned back to the street ;
I sailed to the weary sea ;—
But oft in my fancies her face I meet,
And I know she remembers me.

SHEP

Scotty an' I, we pulls our stakes,
 An' squats along a pass,
An' hustles us a bunch of rakes,
 An' runs 'em on the grass.
They calls us herders-'round, I guess.
 We scarcely ate, or slep'.
But, sir, our stakes was shorely less,
 If it hadn't been for Shep.

You know, a herder never sings—
 The sheep, they rasp him so.
An' all the lonely, landly things
 Just keep his spirits low.
An' Law, it's lonesome—makes you mean!
 Sir, we'd not had no pep'—
I doubt much if we'd made a bean,
 If it hadn't been for Shep.

A man gets scrawny-like out here;
 The life is hard enough;
The silence is a thing to fear;
 The grub is sloppy stuff.
But, sir, we never did complain,
 If things warn't up to rep',
Because a man can bear some pains
 To own a dog like Shep.

Sir, Shep could almost sing a chune,
 An' mighty nigh could speak;
An' evenin's, just before the moon,
 When we was tired an' weak,
We used to get the shaggies in,
 An' Law, we needed he'p;
Sir, I don't know just where we'd been,
 If it hadn't been for Shep.

One evenin', back in last July—
 (Law, but that day was hot!)
We counted; an' the sheep was shy
 Nigh forty of the lot.
Scotty an' I was tuckered out.
 (We never was adept!)
An' them lost sheep can just go pout,
 If it hadn't been for Shep.

Sir, Shep, he spec'lates on the band,
 An' sees how much we're shy;
An' then he strikes acrost the land—
 So hot! an', law, so dry!
An' purty soon he's bringin' back
 Some, though no count was kep';
An', sir, we'd lost 'em—it's a fac'!—
 If it hadn't been for Shep.

Well, sir, no sooner than he saw
 Them shaggies in the pen,
But back he saunters down a draw
 Acrost that white-hot land again.
An' purty soon we hears a yowl,
 An' after him goes Bep',
Another dog, not wuth a scowl,
 'Long side a dog like Shep.

An' then we seen a purty show:
 Shep has some crippled rams
He's hustled up an' bringin' slow;
 An' sir, he's got some lambs.
He don't forget the lambs, that dog!
 Well, shorely you'll git ep,
An' canter quite a dusty jog,
 To beat a dog like Shep.

THE RIME OF THE "MARY SIKES"

A two-mast clipper-bark she was; good-fortune was her boast!
She danced away from every craft that ever rode the coast;
We built her for a weather-queen, the kind a sailor likes!—
But the toughest crew that ever sailed was on the Mary Sikes.

Some ghouls she had from Hamburg Town, a rogue or so from Cork!—
Her lines were spick and pretty as a pickle on a fork!
And every time we sailed from port the Skipper used to say:
"Egad, but don't she understand!" so smooth we sailed away.

We hauled the taste of stinky kegs, the scent of spice and tea,
A smatter-whiff of dizzy gin, adance, from sea to sea!
She bore her tasks most ladylike, and nosed her way so proud
We swore an airy sire was hers, soft-mothered by a cloud.

It chanced that up in high Japan we lay in a lagoon,
A sack of wind among her sails, a white ring 'round the moon,—
The sea was throbbing like a heart that's sorrowing and sighs—
And all our six-and-twenty jacks lay drunk among their styres.

"A weather moon!" I heard one say, among the kegs, below.
"Methinks a gust of flaw is nigh!" another murmured low.
Aye, aye! A bask of sudden wind sent water splashing free;
And veiling dark the staring moon the mists gurled down the sea.

Like leaping tongues of dismal blue the livid surges spun;
And like a frightened gull we scurled and flappered on a run;—
A snip of wood, a tattered rag, on seas that skipped and soared,
We frolicked down the stinging blow, and revelled where it roared.

"Methinks a shoal is just ahead," I heard the Skipper say.
"All hands on deck," I chattered loud, the while the moon grew gray.
For half-a-league away a head rose black against the sky;
And pale along the cliffs I saw a beacon's yellow eye.

“All hands on deck!” I screamed again—a whisper in the blow!—
The Skipper shouted deep and hard, yet none came from below.
I clutched along the lurching deck, and tore away a hatch;
But all was dark as death below, and so I fetched a match.

With shining eyes they winced from me—“On deck!” I shouted loud.
The weather whinnied like a gull—the moon hid in a cloud;
But swift hands struck away my light, and grasped me down the
dark—
“Make fast and tie his gnarly hands!” I heard a voice remark.

“Stop! This is mutiny!” I roared; they only laughed at me.
“Be quiet,” croaked the gloomy dusk, “Or deep you sink to sea!”
“A shoal!” I groaned. They clamored loud; and tied me to a chest.
Above the storm the Skipper cried: “A reef is on our west!”

I vowed, if cheer betide the wreck, and I live down the shock,
And tender seas shall set me safe and sturdy on the rock,
Nor rest, nor stay, nor jest will I till vengeance full be paid! —
Though men may slay me in their pride, yet I am not afraid!

The sailors scuttled to the deck, and hatched up tight the slot;
Yet reeking in the stewy hold my blood remembered not,
Save of the blackened curse of hate I lately had avowed;
And pledged my soul from keep of God, and wagered in my shroud.

We shattered forthright on a shoal; and twenty leagues of sea
Hurled spars and chests and tumbling casks of wreckage on the lea;
And three-and-twenty sailors washed in corses on the shore;
And with them lay the Skipper; yet the sea cast up no more.

Swift followed storm and tide three years, and down the Yeddo bund
I flensed a callow gin-bloat leech that smoked and sang and sunned,
And deeply in his throat I gripped and tore his spirit free
And flung his blood and broken bones to feed the famished sea.

And followed tide a year and seven, and down in Singapore
I shipped a scurley half-mast scum that jewsharped on the shore;
And trailed him from my choppy stern three days and three of
darks,
Till rib and rind and clot and bone he dwindled to the sharks.

Of nights no pain of conscience came, when in my dreams I strayed;
Yet deep down in my 'bittered breast a foaling hatred played
That nurtured hate by kith and kin till many hates were mine—
And on this sailor more was wreaked my blear and bleak design.

And so it chanced a shattered ship, long-crunched on High Japan,
Called ever from its bloody reef to quest the staying man;
And that I loved my ship in life, in death I would be true;
And straightway did my vow remake to quest all ports I knew.

And deep ten years cut in my heart with pain and deathlike woe;
And oft I thought of one I loved ashore, dim years ago—
A flaxen fisher-hag of hest, with lips of purling red,
That kissed my heart with ashes till my hope and love were dead.

And not a wife my years had borne, nor kith nor kin were mine;
And life was only half-a-joy, save deep in blinding wine;
And hope had only that I cleave to see my vengeance paid;
And, dead-of-nights, I fancied new the vows I once had made.

And so I found him in the night, dim-lighted by the moon—
A taste of weather in the air—a tide that wailed its rune—
A busky claw of flying scud was scraping clean the sky—
But after ten deep-furrowed years, we met there, he and I.

I had a pistol at their hearts," he chuckled, swift of speech;
And billowed hate rose in my soul, until with chiming screech
My rifle sang its death to him, and red and still he lay;
And like the cannon-shock of doom the crash wailed down the bay.

I knelt beside him with a match, and gazed into his eyes—
A flock of shipmen looped us round, as when a comrade dies;—
But like a haunting dream I saw a vanished grace relight,
And lisping lips regenerate a sweetness known one night.

A time-slain sin was swept away; but in this featured vice,
A pinch of fathered-flesh of mine lay dead in wan disguise;—
A lading drear of nether-love, when youth had burst its dikes
And borne the flood of fate and death unto the Mary Sikes.

WISP O' SMOKE

I scarce remember where we met, though of meeting my mind is sure.
Perhaps it was only in a dream, and my fancies had gone demure;
Yet lonely evenings as I sit by my hearth and smoke and dream
The curling wisps reveal your face, and pleasantly real you seem.

I think the fire upon the hearth is brighter for dreams of you;
The winds outside blow not so cold as once they were wont to do;
The ghostly flames that flare and leap glow gaylier on the floor—
It even seems my life has dreams it never has known before.

Perhaps my heart is made of dreams, for I think I am always gay.
It makes me happy to sit alone and watch the firelight play;
But oftentimes I want a friend who will share my lonely fire,
Though ever as I think of you I seem to know nought to desire.

And so amid my reveries, at eve, as I sit in my thought,
It seems amid the swirling wraiths your delicate form is wrought;
And thus I fancy that you will come, and if my dreams should come
true,
My heart would be sublimely gay with a hearth and a pipe and you.

HOW THE FIRST GAME OF BASEBALL WAS PLAYED

Saturday noon in Jungle Town, and the monks were off for the week !
The apes had all gone fishing in the pools of the Jungle Creek.
The tiger snored in his sun-washed lair ; the snakes were having a
swim ;
And the big Orang stood up and sang on the Council Sycamore limb.

In the City Square a jaybird sat, preening himself, on a stump.
The stork was getting a drink of water, down at the Old Town Pump.
Some rats were having a wrestling match ; an owl was having a song ;
And the promise there was passing fair for fun for the Jungle Throng.

When up from his lair, where the tiger lay, there came a hideous wail.
The monks and babs went scattering along the Jungle Trail.
The tiger rose and stretched himself, and stuck his nose in the air,
And filled the hills with terrible shrills, like an imp in dire despair.

The monks and babs, hid up the trees, peeked at him, now and then.
The tiger crept outside and stood at the door of his smelly den.
He said to them, "I've had a dream, and I know of a game to play :
Old Jungle Town will do things brown ; we'll make her fame today !"

He stole his way to the leopard's lodge, and filched from over the door
What once was the head of the leopard's dad in the dreamy days of
yore.

And, spying a monk on a shady limb, he hurled it with all his might
At the harmless head ; but the monkey fled, and scuttled away in
fright.

At first nobody would touch the skull, but soon a bab grew brave.
The tiger threw the skull to the bab, and the face of the bab was
grave.

He tossed it on to the monkey, and the monkey swung to the ground ;
And the Jungle Folk got in on the joke, and started the thing around.

The skull went whistling through the air, and hit the stork in the yap.
A monkey took the thing up in a tree, and held it there in his lap.
But after him went the big baboon, for such acts were disgrace;
And the monk so meek got jabbed in the beak and punched all over
the face.

Only one at a time could handle the skull, so the baboon scratched his
bean,
And the tiger, too, and they had a talk and deep thoughts passed be-
tween;—
Then the tiger would throw and bab would bat and some catch the
throws he missed,
And some in front would get a bunt, and the rest grab flies with a fist.

Around in a circle the monkeys stretched on rocks and trees and
stumps;
Tiger was running one place to another, and the rest were up on their
humps;
When home came the leopard whose father's pate was furnishing all
the fun;—
(The rattlesnakes sang on Lake Ungchang, and the stork blinked up
at the sun).

As the leopard slipped from the gloomy woods, and saw the commotion
there,
The sight of his pa's bean being abused was more than his heart could
bear;
He hit the bab in the back of the neck and wiped him up on the loam;
And the monkeys fled, and away they sped; and the tiger stole in
home.

WHEN THE WILD ROSE BLOOMS ON MORNING GLORY TRAIL

I can hear the thrushes singing, as in days that used to be,
When I wandered in the wildwood, and the world seemed kind to me;
Yet the carols make me lonely, for I think how gay it seems
That I used to be in childhood, when I dreamed my golden dreams.

Raven locks are dimmer turning, as the years go drifting fast,
Yet these memories seem to fire me with a pleasure of the past,
And my heart once more grows merry, as I think of days gone by
When we two were childhood sweethearts in the daisies, you and I.

I can see your sweet face smiling, I can hear your voice that sings,
I can feel your gay lips wiling, and your loving arm that clings;
And my life awakes with gladness as the dawn slips down the vale,
For the wildrose blooms in sunshine on the Morning Glory Trail.

SONG OF A CITY TRAMP

Silver dawn, I am thy lover! silver dusk, I am thy groom!
Silver hills, I am the singer of your glee!
Silver night, I am thy watcher by the woodfire in thy gloom!
Silver moon, I am a wanderer with thee!

Yet for me no trail is chiselled up the foothills to the pass!
Life o' joy, I am thy exile, cast apart!
Not for me the joyous open! Not for me the summer grass!
For the city sings its music to my heart.

DAWN

Och, me bye, it's weary I've been, waitin' the wild night through,
Waitin' an' wailin' alone by the sea, wit' only the watch on the
shore;

Och, all alone, and it's weary I've been, an' they bring me what's left
of you:

An' it's only a bone—but it's all me own, an' flesh o' the flesh I
bore.

Och, me bye, ye were all I had left: ye said ye were fond o' the gale,
Lispin' soft on me mayther-breast, when your heart was only a
child:

Said ye would go, as your faythers had gone, an' let you go for a sail;
An' this is the thing the fishermen bring: an', och, but it drives me
wild.

Och, me bye, I was kind to you then, but ye said ye would go away;
An' I gave you a crust, an' a kiss o' me heart, an' bade you return
to me!

But the years are long, an' the world is hard, an' tempests an' storms
will play;

An' they snatched you, me son, me adorin' wan; an' your corse
came up wit' the sea.

Och, me bye, it's breakin' me heart; it's broken it is—me song!

For never a kiss will your cold lips cloy, an' never a jest ye'll say!
Och, there's a smotherin' wail on the seas, an' they tremble for doin'
me wrong;

But never remorse for your tortured corse, nor a murmur o' cheer,
have they!

Och, me bye, it's afar from the world, an' up from the waves that rise
That your soul has been garnered in Heaven by a God that we all
adore;

Och, but it's desolate weary I've been, an' it's mornin' before me eyes!
I've waited the years, but they bring me tears—I pay, when ye
leave the shore.

SECOND SIGHT

I

He

Tossed in the tempest, on a mast,
My life is but a shadow cast—
 A star-dust speck that may prevail,
 Or that may perish with the gale.
I think of her upon the shore,
Who dreams of me, yet whom no more
 My loving lips shall stoop to kiss
 Among the purple evening mists!
Meseems I hear my deathly knell—
To haven I waft—Farewell! Farewell!

II

She

I roam the beach—it comforts me:
Imagined faces throng the sea,
 Of vanished sailor-souls who died,
 Adventuring, on the ocean wide.
One tender-treasured elfin face
Like a precious pearl beams through the wastes:
 “Thy long lost love,” the wavebeats say,
 Dashing their enchanted spray.
Lone is the land, and lone the sea;
Life without love is more lone to me!

MONARCHY

A mother with her happy babe sat rocking at a fire,
And all the world, in reverence, was prostrate at her feet;
For over all she ruled supreme—her child her one desire,—
 A momentary goddess over sadness, and the street.
More sweet than any other song, the lullaby she conned;
More fair than fancied portraiture, the beauty of her face!
It seemed that angels must be near for one to croon so fond—
 That God had touched her spirit with the blessing of His Grace.

THE SIGN OF YAWNING SKULL

McDonald was dead—so everyone said—and he lay stark-cold on his bier;

But his eyes got red, and sagged in his head: he howled like a thing of fear!

He raised in bed, but everyone fled, so he drew a table near,
And wrote, instead, with nails that bled, the tale I vouch for here.

It is chums were we—Bill Gunn, and me, and the lady we both called Kate;

And the story goes, as a dead man knows, the world was our open gate;

For the trail was ours from the land of flowers to the Northland's icy breath,

And many a day by the danger way we slouched along with death.

We made our camps with stars for lamps amidst the ghostly cold.

We picked and panned where the windflaws fanned; up river-ruts we poled.

We scudded free on the frostland sea, where the peaks stuck up their fangs

And the pink outcrops from the rockridge tops, and the high Aurora hangs.

And all the years, come toil or tears, through all the ills we'd seen,

We never yet had quarreled nor fret, nor had words pass between.

And so it chanced as the sunfays danced, one frosty upland morn,

Bill Gunn and me and Kate McKee was feeling a pile forlorn;

For the night before on the dance-hall floor, where the drones wheezed elbow-deep,

Some impish winch took a mind to pinch, and prowled our pokes in our sleep.

We was flat as sacks, and up on jacks, and down on the Queen card trumps;

And Bill, he scowls; and Kate, she growls; and I am roiled with dumps.

But Bill, says he, "Just listen to me," and the green stuff showed in his eyes—

His nose some pink with dance and drink, but the look of his eyebrow, wise—

"Come, let us go where the sage-winds blow, and Fate is asleep in the sand!"

So we pikes away, with feet for a shay, to a huddled desert-land.

Along the brink of a silver sink we tracked a sandshot plain.

The buzzards sighed, the sandwolves cried, the winds wailed out with pain.

The sky drooped down on hills of brown, the livid shadows writhed writhed;

And pools of slag, where winds would drag, soared up as if they were scythed.

The bulging rocks shone up in shocks; the vultures sang their woe;
The sun-washed cliffs slunk down in drifts to the gaping plains below.
Above our trail the hills loomed pale; the sand-imps romped their crags,

And cactus-clumps, like buffalo humps, stood parching among the slags.—

Yet on our backs we bore Kate's packs, as joyously as play,
For courted prize was to our eyes to ease our lady's way.

Then Kate, quoth she: "A realm I see, beneath the summit's frond,
Where everything with pay doth cling on hills and dells beyond!"

We looked away: the hills were gray: the desert burned our feet,
But down our trail we saw a vale that stretched out like a sheet.

We spanned a rise; upon our eyes a yellow desert rolled

With hummels bared where yuccas stared on fields of shining gold!

The cliffs sheered bluff; the desert's cuff was hemmed with silver seams,

With nuggets spread like crumbs of bread along the dimlit streams.

"Let Midas' dust encave in crust!" (Bill tossed aside his pack!)

"We'll stake our claims, and write our names, and take some glitter back!"

Kate, she is dumb; I chew my thumb; Bill lifts his pickax high,
And chucks a stake down in the cake, and claims all to the sky.

But Kate, she rucks, as big as ducks: "That's my claim, Bill" says she. So up Bill jumps, and on his humps, and scowls, and says, says he: "What's this I hear? Have patience, dear! There's gold here for us all!"

But Kate stands pat, and quick as scat she sinks right down to bawl. Bill Gunn, he frowns; Kate glints her browns; I smiles upon her—so! She smiles and sighs, and meets my eyes, and hangs on my elbow.

"I like you, Mc!" she whispers back. I smacks her on the cheek. Kate glints her browns, and Bill, he frowns, and in he starts to speak. "I say, it's mine," Kate starts to whine, and so I looks my worst; Though Bill contends, as we are friends, it hurts none if he's first. But Kate, she scowls, and whoops and howls, as if her heart will break;

And so, says I: "Bill, friends ain't why! You'll have to move your stake."

He wants to wait—says he to Kate: "Come, Kate, dear, cool the row!" But Kate, she sighs, and rubs her eyes, and wails, "That's my claim, now."

Well! Kate, she won't, and Bill, he don't: my pickax weighs a ton; So up I swings and down I bring the thing and kills Bill Gunn.

I took my pick and hollowed quick a grave among the gold. I prodded Bill—his heart was still—his nose was blue and cold. We buried him—the desert rim grew shot with blood and fire. The winds complained—Kate's face was pained—Bill grunted in his byre.

I looked at Kate—her face grew straight; she wept at what I'd done. The desert howled, and Bill he growled, and redly glimmed the sun. Yet there we kissed in the bloody mist that fumed around Bill's grave. Amid the musk of desert dusk we vowed we would be brave.

"I'll do my worst," Kate fondly burst; says I, "Let's name the mine—What could we claim without a name, where never is a sign?" So Kate, she thinks; Bill's byre, it shrinks; the wind whines like a gull.

"I move," says I—(Bill heaves a sigh)—"THE SIGN OF YAWNING SKULL."

We staked the mine from the summit line, where the rise and ridge
made one,

To the cuddled hills where sunflame spills its dazzle down the run.
We piled a hill of gold on Bill that glimmered, gleaming high,
And covered him till his blood grew dim, and the gleam went out of
his eye.

But Kate she frowned and on the ground she fell beside the dead
And lay alone like a thing of stone, and never a word she said.
Bill Gunn, he cried, and hollow-eyed, he glared from out the pit;
And so I turned—my bosom burned—I slouched away from it.
I heard Kate scream—I felt the gleam of eyes that pierced me through.
The hot sky drooped—a buzzard swooped, and over me he flew.
I screamed to Kate: "Alack, my fate—my fate is on me, dear!"
But Kate, she cried, and wailed and sighed, and swift my eyes grew
blear.

"Alas! Alack!" I dropped my pack. Back to the grave I ran.
But Kate lay still upon the hill, for she had loved the man.
"If I had known," I tried to moan; my throat grew parched and dry.
"If I had thought!" My tongue seemed caught, and Kate would only
cry.

I grabbed her hand, and down the sand we fled by rise and run:
Beneath our feet the sand throbs beat; above us flamed the sun.
"Oh Kate!" I said—my spirit bled—"If I had only known!"
She hung her face and down the wastes her vision scanned alone.

Across the land a wizard's hand swept clouds of pouring blood.
Upon the South a dragon's mouth spit gore in shrouding scud.
Upon the North a blazing scorch of fire came furling down.
Upon the West the sand-hag's breast was seared with streaks of
brown.

Yet dim and pale upon our trail we met a host of men
That journeyed down the hills of brown with laughter now and then,
A merry crew of ruddy hue, with lips and eyes divine,
Along the quest that knows no rest till love has found its shrine.
And with them there were women fair with joyous lisp and smile
And children sweet with trudging feet, and laughter to beguile;
Forever on, forever gone upon the ways of love,
That heeds no gale and knows no fail, and is true as heaven above

My bosom yearned: To Kate I turned: She wept with broken heart,
An outcast, she, to love or glee, ordained to dwell apart.
For us these spurned! Alas, none turned to heed us as we fled,
And so we spanned the helpless land, and on, and on, we sped.—
And then Kate fell: Fate rang her knell: she died among the sands;
I heaped a mound of sand around; then staggered down the lands.

And so at last as day was past I sighted far a light,
And down a run I wheeled and spun, and raced toward the night.
Along a hill beside a rill I found a herdsman's hut
With bleating sheep upon a steep, a sheepfold in a rut.
I tried to speak—a maudlin shriek was all my voice would make.
I tried to sing—my lips would cling: I gargled like a snake.
Along a draw my wild brain saw some herders going home.
I scarce could wait—I reached a gate—my mouth was dry with foam.
The herdsmen shrunk from me and slunk as from a leper's hand.
My spirits fell: I hear a knell of death sound down the sand.
Across the wastes there swept a face, and close on me it ran—
A steel-gray shape, with eyes of grape! The spirit of a man!—
Hot on my trail! It gives a wail! The herdsmen all were still!
It shakes its head, and strikes me dead with one weak hand! It's
Bill!

And this I plead of you who read and may not shirk to mind:
Love is a game whose joy or shame you ever leave behind.
For every vice we pay our price—each sin will bring its sigh;
And last of all before my call is come, and I do die:
Before you have sold your friend for gold, some lady's love to win,
Think of the jade whose vows you both paid, and the woman she
might have been.

McDonald was dead, so everyone said—he was, but they did not know.
But his eyes got red and sagged in his head; he howled like an anvil-
blow!

He raised in bed, but everyone fled; he called, but none would go;
So he wrote instead with nails that bled this selfsame tale of woe.

KINGSHIP

When the roses of summer are faded and dead,
And the leaves of the autumn are turning to red—
When the last word of friendship is spoken and told,
And we part from the clasp of the hand that we hold—
Shall our lips dare to sing, when our breasts hold a dart,
As the pain of farewell turns to grief in the heart?
For the lover must sigh,
And the singer must sing,
Yet the lover must die,—
But the singer is king!

When the last singing lover is silent and dead,
And we lay the last wreath of our love at his head—
When the last loving singer is songless and still,
And he crumbles to dust in his grave on the hill,—
Can we ever forget how their lays used to preen
With the joy of a kiss from the lips of a queen?
For the lover must sigh,
And the singer must sing,
Yet the lover must die,—
But the singer is king!

LOVE IN A CAFE

I come here often, for I like the singing,
To loll at dimlit tables with my wine;
Because the singer, to her carols clinging,
Is, well—a rather favored friend of mine.

For I am old, and slow, while she is merry;
But see! her features fill my heart with woe!
Ah, in my wine my old regrets I bury—
I loved her mother, twenty years ago.

A JOB FOR EVERYBODY

Plug away! Plug away!
What's the use o' whinin'?
Can't you see it's dawn o' day?
Look, the sun is shinin'!
What's the use o' hagglin'?
Peel your coat, an' buckle in!
Laziness is more'n sin!
Idleness is pinin'!

Do it now! Do it now!
May be no tomorrow!
Show the other fellow how!
Bear his pain an' sorrow!
Man's a needy brotherhood:
Everybody, if he would,
Might lend other people good—
Wouldn't need to borrow.

Grub along! Grub along!
Whistle like you meant it!
Tell a joke, an' sing a song:
No one will resent it!
Lend a lift, an' don't be tight!
Hoardin' joy was never right!
Treat the other fellow white!
Keep life like God lent it!

Hit the grit! Hit the grit!
Tumble to an' tussle!
Grab a hold, an' tote your bit!
How's the time to rustle!
No one cares to hear your groans:
Change your growls for gayer tones!
Don't be just a bag o' bones!
Get to work, an' hustle!

LE SACROSANT

I was down by the edge of the sea, that night;
And the dim east basked in the glinting moon;
On the headland glimmered the siren-light,
And the fishermen seined in the dim lagoon.

The surges moaned as they rose and fell
In the half-hushed wake of a passing breeze;
And down from the cliffs came a temple bell
From its tower among the magnolia trees.

As you scan from the shore to the ivied wall
Of the cliff-steep headland, pale as a ghost,
You can see a marbled convent hall,
As lone as a hermit upon the dim coast.

And often at night from the dimlit cliffs
You can hear the strains of a lonely song,
That wails down the shores and windy drifts;
And its lingering echoes murmur long.

It made me think of another night
Of those other years—I was younger, then!
With the singing sea, and the white moonlight,
And the laughing jests of the fishermen.

“Ah, you have come, at last,” she said;
And she touched my lips like a fairy’s wing;
And the dew gleamed on her hooded head
As she clung to me, there, an elfin thing.

I do not remember how long it was;
It could not have been long—half-an-hourglass run!—
And the dim stars jeweled the stirring grass
As I clasped to my breast a virgin nun.

“I have painted a picture,” I said to her ;
“She is fair as a goddess in Heaven above,
And she sits in the amphitheater,
Saying the rosary of her love.”

She was smiling to me, with her lips upturned,
And her face was a chalice of glowing wine ;
And a flaming love in my bosom yearned
To this virgin nun, whose love was mine.

It was over, then ; and I went away,
Along the path, to the mourning sea ;
She waved her hand ; and I heard her say :
“Forgive, forget ; but it cannot be !”

And then came her years in the convent hall,
And the passioned faces my brush had made,
But of nights she sang at the vesper call,
And I heard her far in the gloaming glade.

But now I shall hear her song no more :
She dies in the chancel, in her tears ;
And I am wailing along the shore,
Lost, like a starbeam in boundless spheres.

Are the vows of nuns such ghastly things
That the vows of a human love must die ?
It is moonlit tonight, and the gay tide sings ;
But our hearts are broken, my nun and I.

SPRING IN THE UPLANDS

Winter fades from the passes,
Summits and peaks grow bare,
And a soft warm wind harasses
The tree-tops everywhere.
Awake is the mountain brooklet,
And the hidden ripples sing,
And a cricket chirps in the nooklet
At the love-call of the Spring.

Spring, when the heart beats truer,
And gladness awakes from sleep!
Spring, when the skies are bluer,
And the winds of April weep.
Spring, and the Summer's warning
That spills through the field by day,
Till the last lone April Morning
That longs for the flowers of May.

Tempest is past and over;
Earth is bereft of regret.
Springtime has come, her lover,
To sow Earth's womb with fret.
Our countless hopes reflowerish;
Our joyous songs we sing,
In the peace that our pleasures nourish
On the breast of the passionate Spring.

And the Spring forever calls us
And we cannot but follow its lure
To flee from the cloister that walls us
And roam over meadow and moor.
For a strange rest fills the spirit,
And the wan winds bring no tear,
Till our very desires endear it,
And we sing to the newborn year.

A ROSE OF OLD CHAMPOEG

On a far frontier, in olden times,
Stood a rude log church, with a brazen chimes,
Where the faithful villagers came to pray
With the wanderer from far away.
There were settlers came, and trappers, too,
There were mademoiselles, with eyes of blue.
There were reckless men, that left their arts
For a blessing of God to fill their hearts,
Kneeling in worship penitent,
Bowing their heads for sacrament,
As Vaucaire, the Good Priest, would say,
 "O Domine, absolve me!"

Out in the village, Constance played,
A wanton damsel, undismayed
By thoughts of duty, of care, or sin—
Only a waif kind words would win.
She lived where the blacksmith's anvil rang;
But Sunday morn, when the church-chimes sang
And the village hushed to a silent dream
As the voyageurs sang down the stream,
The wanton damsel crept away
To the village burial-ground to pray.
And while the Good Priest spoke of grace,
The wanton wept in the burial place;
For a grief was hers she could not say:
Her father, who knew? Had he gone away?
Her mother had sinned, as some will do,
And died in shame, as the Good Priest knew,
Unshriven, unblest, in her last wild breath,
As she kissed her shame with lips of death.
Constance, the child, was the price she paid;
And Constance knew: It was why she strayed
To the tombs, when the faithful went to pray,
 "O Domine, absolve me!"

Now the Good Priest wore upon his breast
A silver Cross the Pope had blest
That dangled, swinging to and fro
A bleeding manchrist, torn with woe.
The faithful villagers loved the Priest,
Who gladdened their hearts in fast and feast;
And they loved the Cross, for Christ was there:
Bending their knees before Vaucaire,
Baring their heads, when they chanced to meet,
Crossing their breasts, at the Good Priest's feet;
And the fame of the Cross was far and wide,
A talisman of the countryside.
But the wanton damsel they scorned to see,
As they came to prayers in the sacristy;
For she loved not the virgin's face,
Nor came to the prayers in the holy place:
She laughed at the water Vaucaire blessed;
Chided the faithful one, crossing his breast;
Jeered at the candles Vaucaire kept bright
At the chancel-door, from morn till night!
But ah! when the chants of the worship rose,
Constance would sing to the last note's close,
Reminding them there of another child
Who once had sung so, undefiled.
And so they smiled to the Good Vaucaire
As they came from afar to worship there;
But for Constance, only a word had they—
"O Domine, absolve me!"

One day of prayers, the Cross was gone—
Vaucaire pined from early dawn
Till the evening-hush, in the bitter loss
Of his sacred talisman, the Cross;
Yet never a trace did he chance to find—
"Ah, it is gone!" he said, resigned.
"Who stole the Cross?" the weaver sighed.
"Who stole the Cross?" mourned Lapere Conuyd.
Constance was asked—she would not deny:
"What need of a Cross to such as I?"—

The faithful shared in the Good Priest's woe:
"Father, forgive; we do not know!"
Just without the chancel-door,
A tame rosevine its incense bore
Bleeding its fragrance upon the air
Of the sacristy, and the chancel, there.
No villager dared to touch the bower,
For a curse was his who should snatch a flower.
The rose was holy—so said Vaucaire—
And the faithful, as they came to prayer,
Would bend a knee, and bow the head,
Crossing their breasts, as if in dread,
Devoutly saying a holy verse,
Lest theirs should be the sinner's curse—
One might have smiled to hear them say,
"O Domine, absolve me!"

So evening came, this holy day.
The winds were still; the birds were gay;
In the river woods a wildfowl crew;
And the voyageurs sang of Charlefoix.
The livid flare of sunset flame
Glimmered upon Le Prairie Grand Dame;
At the chancel-door, where all might see,
Vaucaire was telling his rosary.
Constance played about the mound
That stood apart in the burial ground,
Within the walls of the taregrown plot,
That all, it seemed, but she, forgot.
Conuyd, the blacksmith, at his door,
Staring across to the river shore,
Watched the child in the churchyard, there:
Saw her run to the vine and tear
A forbidden blossom from its place
And bear it back to the burial space—
And his lips half-moved, as if to say,
"O Domine, absolve me!"

He called Vaucaire, and the Good Priest came,
And the villagers, to the grave of shame;
Where they found the damsel upon the moss,
Digging the turf with a silver cross.
"She stole the Cross!" the weaver said;
But the Good Priest only hung his head,
Watching the child, and his eyes grew dim;
And the villagers stood watching him.
"Here is your Cross!" the wanton sighed;
The Good Priest knelt, and strove to hide
A pensive tear; and the faithful there
Knelt by him, as he breathed a prayer:—
"I found it here," the wanton smiled.
"I lost it here," the Good Priest wiled—
"I lost it—I had come to pray:
O Domine, absolve me!"

QUEST

I

Only a wave with a tattered crest—
Only a wind that's free—
Only the blaze of a burning west—
Evening falls asea;
Only a ship with a silver sail—
Only a mast that bends—
Only the voice of the singing gale—
Calmly the night descends.

II

Only a light on a shore afar—
Only a port that gleams—
Only the wail of the harbor bar
And a sailor-heart that dreams—
Only a soul that sighs alone—
Darkly as daylight dulls—
Only a lover that seeks his own—
Only the song of gulls.

TO A DEAD SWALLOW

Alas! Poor Little Heart! And I had loved him so!
My waking dawns shall hear his voice no more;
His silver caroling no longer shall implore
To me as if to bid me let him go.
I touch his cage, yet vainly wait reply;
He flutters not (as if in joy) from me.
His song is silent that once sang merrily
And through his flutish cage sad breezes sigh.

—O Little Heart, I mourn that thou art gone!
Perchance another voice will sing sweet lays
To cheer me in the waking peace of dawn,
Goodfaring me upon my troubled ways;
Yet never shall a lyric throat impart
Thy hopes, thy cheers to me, dear Little Heart.

THE LYRE OF LIFE

Bend to the lute: Let the soul respond
To the glamour and lilt of a lay,
For the heart of the singer is ever fond,
And the heart of the listener gay.

Bend to the lute: and the inmost voice
Of primitive glamour and glee
Shall bear to thy fancies a cause to rejoice,
And a spirit of gladness to thee.

Bend to the lute, for springtime comes,
And flowers the purple-ravine;
Music awakens its pipes and drums,
And a robin song sounds between.

Bend to the lute, lest the cords of thy heart
Shall bind thee too well to the throng!
Drain with the intricate skill of thy art
Youth's wine-chalice into thy song!

A PILGRIM OF THE UPLANDS

Forty below in the uplands, and the wind was bitter keen!
I sat at my frosted window, and the snow was a silver sheen!
Fang-peaks gnawed the steely sky, and the moonlight glared between!

Out in the wind-washed barrens, where the trees drooped ghostly-pale,
I scanned the snow-spread chuchyard that gleamed in the dazzled
vale,
Where the village dead lay sleeping by the side of the upland trail.

I could hear a far wolf wailing his melancholy tone;
But out among the silent tombs, where gleams of moonlight shone,
I saw the twisted figure of a man who walked alone.

He stooped hard at the shoulders, and crouched amid the gloom;
Would pause at some dim monument, but soon again resume
His half-mysterious journey; then he knelt down by a tomb.

Everyone knows the story of the girl that is buried there.
Men called her a flaxen beauty, with a proud, but loving, air.
She was shot dead in a cabin on the banks of the Little Bear.

It is said she loved Tom Gavin, and Crippled Jones she spurned;
Though—they have it—Jones was the truer: that Jones from trail
returned
As she lay in the arms of Gavin, while the light in the cabin burned.

And so as she lisped to her lover, a shot rang out in the dark,
That shattered the cabin window, and whispered death to its mark;
And the girl fell back on the table, and lay there stiff, and stark.

Such was the simple story of the tomb of Lil Raveau.
The only trace of the murderer was the print of a twisted shoe.
But he who had lost her, and slain her? all men in the uplands knew.

Gold was laid for his capture; bounty was laid for his bones.
Men of the hills were surly, and railed him in bitter tones—
As a word of shame in the uplands was the name of Outlaw Jones.

It was years since a word of the murderer, except the night before
A dagger had sunk like an arrow through a panel of Gavin's door
As Gavin romped at the hearthrug, with his babe, on the cabin floor.

As I thought of this I watched the man in the lonely burial row,
When suddenly I saw him rise in the moonlight's dimming glow,
And lift his hands in an unheard prayer by the tomb there in the snow.

He rose to his feet with a stagger, and out of the tombs he stalked.
He stumbled toward my cabin: like a heartless gnome he walked.
His lips I could see were moving, yet I heard not the things he talked.

I let him in at the threshold, and the heartlog's fitful glare
Lighted his face like a dead man's; I saw he was wrinkled with care:
His features were darkened and lowering, eyes set hard in a stare.

"Come, have a seat at the table!" But he waved me off with his hand,
Muttering something indistinct I could not quite understand.
He crouched like a dog at the hearthlog, warming a knotted hand.

"You are a priest," he queried, peering deep in my eye.
I nodded. "Yes, if you like, sir." And his bosom fell in a sigh.
The wind, outside in the barrens, sang like a gull in the sky.

I scanned him there for a moment, but strove in vain to place
His rugged hardened features (though I thought I had seen the face.)
I heard him groan and murmur, and he seemed in a kind of a daze.

The wind was whining drearily, and shook the cabin door;
It wailed like mad in the chimney with a hideous sort of a roar;
And the fire sent imps of crimson to dancing upon the floor.

"Just been out in the churchyard," the stranger stammered, and said.
"Lil Raveau is buried there." He stared where the hearthlog bled,
Cowering low before the flames, and his face was lighted red.

“Lil! She used to call to me—she calls me, even yet;
And often I fancy I see her, and her eyes are tearful, and wet.
I came to her tomb, a pilgrim, to a shrine of an old regret.

“I went last night for Gavin—but he had a babe in his hands.
After a man has borne his death, he always understands:
I only pierced the door with a dagger!” He was looking into the
brands.

“Lil was my sweetheart, Father; then I married her, here.
No one knew; then she sinned with Gavin—I knew not for nearly a
year.

I had come that night to the window, and the firelight was very clear.

“She lay in his arms, in the cabin—everyone knows the rest.
I came once more to pray by her grace.” His face was sorely strest;
And the wind and the fire were sobbing: the murderer had confessed.

MOUNT HOOD

Dim crags lift up along the east,
But all the land is lone and still;
Beauty, like a heavenly priest,
Rules white upon the highest hill!

There is no stir in all the land,
Nor ought but silence, anywhere;
For earth lies just as Nature's hand
Bestowed her ray of beauty there.

Along the distant open lea,
A pool of valley mist hangs low,
That hides a realm of gleams from me,
Where all is joyfulness, I know.

And high athwart the glinting field
A chalk gnome towers through the trees,
Where Time has graved on Nature's shield
His embonpoint of centuries.

SAILING OUT OF BALTIMORE

Staunch of keel, to brave the weather;
Slender-masted; prows agileam;
Stout of sail, and free of tether;
Dance the galleys on the stream;
Down the shining glow of river,
Gleaming-blue, from shore to shore,
Out toward the sea, forever,
Sail the ships of Baltimore.

Dripping-wet with azure offing,
Where the whitecaps glitter bright,
And the sweetened surge is coughing
Deathly hoarse from morn till night,
Swift they glide, as gulls that flutter,
Dancing past the dewy shore,
To the seas that wail and mutter—
Merry ships of Baltimore!

Now their saltened sheets awaken;
Famished tide-rips sweep them fast,
Down the gurlly sounds betaken,
Beckoned fondly by the blast.
Glinting ripples frolic 'round them;
Through their ropes the breezes roar;—
Jovial destiny redound them,
Sturdy ships of Baltimore!

Noon and night, by mistlights gleaming,
Ever sailing far and free,
Blinding beacons, blearly beaming,
Light their journey out to sea;
Ever outward, onward veering,
By the sobbing wastes of shore,
Hard into the billows steering—
Bonny ships of Baltimore!

By a thousand shores and moorlands
Shall their reeking cargoes fall,
Questing far and lonely lurelands,
As a swallow at their call!
Beacons, guide them safely, leaward,
Bear them boldly with their store!—
Bonny hazard, greet them seaward,
Sailing out of Baltimore!

BERLETA

On the Hills of Manzanita stands Berleta—
But she only gathers sticks, and keeps her fire;
And the breakers sing below,
But she sings not, in her woe;
And her heart is very heavy with desire.

There was one in Manzanita loved Berleta;
But he killed a companero, did her hero!
And across the singing spray
He is prisoned up to stay;
And his name is Carmenita Bandocero.

On the isle, a donjonero, pines her hero—
But he only thinks of love, and he is still;
And the breakers sing below,
But he sings not, in his woe;
For he sees her gleaming fire upon the hill.

He has killed a companero, has her hero,
On the Hills of Manzanita, for Berleta;
But he whistles light and gay
To the fire across the bay;
And she thinks him very dear, oh! does Berleta.

THE BRIDE OF CERRO GORDO

In the Hills of Cerro Gordo, by the Colorado's tide,
Stands a convent-house that towers through the shadows of the
gorge,
Veiled with mists from out the canyons, where a Titan blows his
forge,
Peering down the yellow chasms with the mockery of pride.
In the narrow prisoned chancels torpid rosaries are telling,
In the hands of lonely hearts that love the merry world no more.
Dawn of day can hear them praying; sunset hears their murmurs
welling,
By the broken-hearted grandeur of the Colorado shore.

Down the cliffs the shadows flutter, and the dimming ripples sigh;
Gasping songs of desolation echo sadly up the walls;
With a note of mirthless laughter high a wheeling eagle calls
To the dumb, dream-haunted garden from the glory of the sky.
Solitary breezes swirl like raving imps across the mesas;
Cubloid masses of gray ruin bare their hummels to the sun;
And the house stares down upon it, silent as the graven Jesus
As he suffers in the chancel where His Holy Will is done.

In a giddy convent window, where the crags vault sheer away,
Stands the figure of a woman, scanning where the desert lies:
Elfin mistlights dance below her; impish shimmers blear her eyes,
Yet she speaks not, only gazes where the basking vistas play.
See! her locks are deeply raven; there's a flower at her bosom—
Ah! she kisses it with gladness, for it brings a joy to her!
Deep she breathes the soothing fragrance from the chalice of its
blossom,
Gazing like a lonely goddess down the desert-theater.

She is silent! She is broken! And her reverie is woe,
Is a vagary of grief, wherein the imps of sadness play:
She is thinking of her lover that has wooed her in the May,
Far away from Cerro Gordo, dim remembered days ago.

To her heart comes recollection of his pledge of true devotion :
Moonlit night—a soft guitar—a night of love among the sands.
Ere she came into the convent and his ship sailed down the ocean—
She is thinking of a sunset, and a sky of burning brands.

She is lonely! She is tortured! And the convent breaks her heart!
Rarest dreams are gone and vanished; dearest dreams are fluttered
by!

Love is burned to dust and ashes in the yearning hours that sigh,
In the vows she pledged her lover absence could not wrest apart.
As she tells her holy rosary her fancies all go drifting;
She is thinking of a tempest, and a wreck upon the sea!
Sad she gazes down the chasms, where the mystic lights go shifting;
And she thinks, How very lonelier than death one's life may be!

He is singing up the valley—you can hear his softened chime :
Sobbing murmurs—fitful wails—a lonely symphony of song! —
Now he kneels without the convent, praying God, If love be wrong?
Creeps into the scented garden: it is prayers, and eveningtime.
Swift he hastens to the portals—from the sacristy emerges,
Guised in veiling monkish garments—lays aside his loved guitar—
Steals his way into the cloisters, where the holy chanting surges,
And a rosary is told by one that kneels against her bar.

It is sunset in the convent by the Colorado's tide.
Hooded faces at high windows cross their breasts before the sun.
But into the cloisters stealing comes a monk that seeks a nun :
She is praying in the silence! He is standing by her side!
From her rosary she rises—ah! he flings away his habit!
Calls to her—she clutches to him! Sunset paints them with his gloss.
Up the summit screams a buzzard; down the canyon shrills a rabbit—
But two cloistered lovers kiss within the shadow of the Cross.

OUTCAST

Mine is no song of love and birth,
But of one who sins for our sake—
The woman we hate, regardless of worth,
And say is unworthy to take.

She sins because her soul is weak,
And she isn't afraid to trust,
Though after she sins she doesn't speak,
For men are not half-just.

She waits a call in seven seas;
She trafficks and trades in the Ports;
And they who scorn her jest in ease,
As she cringes in the courts.

But that is the price the woman pays,
For a crust, and a flask of brew:
There is misery in her faded face—
And vice provides the clue.

Behold the woman, unloved, unblest,
Who lies with her ship on the shoal—
Behold the woman with aching breast,
The Curse of Time on her soul!

SONNET: ON A CHALICE

Ah, could this cup, wherein my wine glows dim,
Respond with kisses, as I touch its brim,
 With that wild sweetness of its stinging flood—
 What empery of joyousness would flame my blood!
What blest respite from tortuous desires;
From hope debased, that wantonly aspires!—
 Then might I scale afar through star-shot deeps,
 Where mouldering sunshed planet sweeps;
Lolling at dusk upon some cosmic west,
With some hale moongod, wan with dreams unguet;
 And, lolling, dream, and dreaming, gasp in death,
 Whose haggard witlessness of faded breath
Wraps even at last each realm that glows—
Lie still—and rest—and find repose.

UNREST IN THE DUST

Could Godhead know my overmastering desire,
My zest for rulership of star-empire,
 Sceptred where moonfays drag their cosmic nets,
 Sunbaited, trawled from heaven's parapets—
Could Godhead sense my drunken fancy-fire,
My vaulting hopes, that wantonly aspire,
 Striving to mount athwart the dust's unease,
 Upward through heavenly infinities—
Could Godhead revel in my fevered lust
That bids me scale from starlit aisles of dust—
 Ah, what unrest were his! What fervid hope!
 Swift through the fretted spheres his soul would grope,
Till he—as thou, as I, as all that quest!—
Should shatter, fall, and in the dust find rest.

DESOLATION

I loved him, but he went away, and went afar from me,
And out he sailed across the bay, toward the sunlit sea!
And every night I set my light along the shadowed hill,
Imploring sea-waves, half-aleap, "Does lover love me still?"
Methinks had I been listless gull
That flutters on the wave,
I surely had gone trailing
For by sailor-lover brave!

I loved him, but he sailed away; and that was years ago!
I never dared to smile to him, nor let him even know;
Yet he was pride of forty coasts, and I the maid whose wiles
Had sent his good ship trailing down the dreary coastwise miles.

Oh he was pride of forty coasts, and pride of all the sea!
We met at autumn-festival—he spoke his love to me;
But I could never tell him that his love had made me glad—
Could only lift my wanton-lips, and laugh at lover-lad.
And so he went away to sea,
And sailed afar, afar;
And every night my light put down
To show him by the bar!

But oh! so many years have gone that I am growing sad!
Methinks perhaps a wreck or flaw has taken sailor-lad!
Ah love, thou rogue, that jests at men afar away at sea,
Canst say if bonny sailor-lover-lad still waits for me?

And there were other lads who loved, though none were fair as he!
Yet on the sands their corpses lie, the wreckage of the sea!
Nor lurks a lonely fisher-lass to grieve their mournful fates,
And only surges sigh for them down headland desolates!
Yet what if death shall lay them low,
Of churling unbegat,
For love of me, who loved them not?
Shall I take heed of that?

The fishers say: "It breaks our hearts her love so cold abides!
She only frolics by the sea, and revels with the tides!

It crushes us that kith and kin should mock us for our truth:
Will she now know we love her well?" (Too well, know I, forsooth!)

"And lo! she spurns us in her pride, and lingers on the west,
Nor joins us in our festival, nor tarries for a guest!

She leers at us with heedless eye, nor from her dreams will stray,
To share a loving hour with us; but only scans the bay!

And though she sights our jovial fleets

Come home at set of sun,

She sets her lamp along the shore,

Nor nods to anyone!

At night, the fishers come to haven, and forth at dawn they go,
With sagging sail, and flashing keel; and oh! I love them so!

Yet never comes my loved one's bark, with silver sails agleam,
Save to the anchorage of hope, mine harbor place of dream!

Oh lover-lad, the lonely hours have fretted into years.

My heart grows sad in wait for you; I mourn you in my tears!

My heacon burns in feeble hope long the lonely sea:

Methinks each bark is yours, come home, at last, to shore, and me.

Nor have I lingered on your face,

But you have made me gay!

Methinks how lone would be the world,

If love were snatched away!

Last night my light was on the hill, and, over trackless wastes,
Amid the roaring scuds of sea, methinks I saw his face!

The sea was white beneath the moon, and silver was his bark!

And yet tonight my dream is dead, and land and sea is dark!

Oh where has gone my lover-lad, who sought his ships and sails,
Who tracked across the sunlit bay to brave the bitter gales?

My heart is lonely as the hills! Methinks I hear a call!

Can it be he returning home to greet, after all?

Methinks his face is smiling—
But something mocks my will!
It seems that he is calling,
And my heart will not be still!

I've kept my blear light burning as the seaward ships moved by
From the crimson hour of sunset, till dawning flushed the sky!

Oh lover-lad, my lover-lad, I've waited all the night!
Did you not find my haven? Could you not see my light?

The dawn creeps o'er the seadowns, and swift my light goes out!
Across the bay a bark moves in! I hear the sailors shout.

Ashore at last! But oh! how still the sailors seem to be!
I ask them all for tidings of my lover-lad asea.

And now no more my light goes out,
But all is dark instead!
He did not know I loved him,
And they tell me he is dead.

WHO?

Who that loves but joys in a soft red dusk,
When the gods of the summer fields lie slain,
And the thistle goes venturing from its husk,
And the autumn sports in the lane?
Who that sings but joys in the land and sea,
In the peace that comforts, the woes that crush,
And the linnet that shrills in the hawthorn tree,
And the song of the summer-thrush?
Who that grieves but joys in a word of cheer,
When the spirit of loneliness strives and stings
And the loving communion of hearts sincere
In the solace a reverie brings?
Who that toils but joys in a voice of hope,
When the sweat-white lust of his labor swells,
When out of the dark like a ghoul that gropes
Steals the chiming of evening bells?

WHAT DICKY THOUGHT

If I were a bird,
 I would sing all the day :
Hill and dale would be stirred
 With the joy of my lay ;
And my soul would revolt, as with pleasure-deferred,
If I were a bird ; oh, if I were a bird !

If I were a bird,
 And I had me a nest,
And a stranger inferred
 It was not of the best,
I should never desist till he swallowed the word,
If I were a bird ; oh, if I were a bird !

If I were a bird,
 And I had me a mate,
I should say not a word,
 Either early or late
That the soul of my mate to unrest would be stirred,
If I were a bird ; oh, if I were a bird !

If I were a bird,
 And a birdling were mine
And it chanced that I heard
 What beheld the design
Of a slur, to a foray my heart would be spurred,
If I were a bird ; oh, if I were a bird !

If I were a bird,
 With a nest and a dame
And a birdling—my word !—
 I would carol their fame
Till the uttermost realms of Creation had heard,
If I were a bird ; oh, if I were a bird !

THE MEADOW-LOVER

Lured by the sweet of strange meadows, I wander away to far fields,

Where night creeps into the coppice, and solitude dwells;
Nor harvester reaps in the dusk what the amber autumn yields,
And only the anxious song of a lark floats through the dells.

Yet a sumac-leaf turns, and purple haze foretells
Days of the dreamless winter, blear with bitter snow,
And a chiming rill sings up to me from the shadowed vale below :

“Life hath but love; death hath all else.”

Now trailing mist lies on the foothills; dusk and night rift down,

And the woodland glade re-echoes with the lilt of far-off bells.
A gleaming vagary of crimson flamors on the lowland town,
Wreathing the scarlet gables around with coronels;
Which the weary weaver-heart in somber peace compels
To tender fantasies that haunt the duskening gloom;
And, falling into reverie, he sings unto his loom :

“Life hath but love; death hath all else.”

In the joy of the tender seduction that beckons my restive feet,

I am straying to far-off meadows, where capricious Oriels
Bid gasping song stray with the wistful wind in accents sweet,
Whose fondled lyricry all other song excels.

Sweet with the sad-breathed taste of scented calomels
I bathe my muse in wilding lay that knows no tear.—
Summer is dying; and autumn winds sing in a mirth austere :

“Life hath but love; death hath all else.”

Faint glows the earth, and dim, wreathed in an exquisite sorcery

Shades of the gloam draw over the hills, and evensong wells.
The scarlet lips of the sunset are kist by the passionate sea;
Surges sing through the downs, and lend the short strange spells.—
Awakened, as if from a dream the poppy fancy swells,
I lift my song to the stars, and greet them merrily, gay;
Cosmos answering back across its infinites, to say :

“Life hath but love; death hath all else.”

SOUTHEAST OF HEART'S DESIRE

Southeast along the ridges,
Where the knight-fox slinks below,
And the sand-birds are troubled midges
That dart from the desert roe,
Lies the the barest of blighted valleys,
In a daze of green and gold;
Where an imp from a wizard's galleys
Cleft a porphyry of old.
Around lie the desert ranges,
Where silence forever rules,
Ariot with whims and changes,
Trysting with fates and fools—
Blasted and blear and battered
By the winds' eternal ire,
Like a hideous dream the hills lie scattered,
Southeast of Heart's Desire.

Not even a desert rabbit;
Deserted by beast and bird;
Silent forever by habit;
Startled if sound be heard.
Lonesome, renounced, heartbroken,
Seared by the withering blight,
Accursed by a mad God's token,
And shriven of all delight;
Brooding, barrenly gleaming
In the bitter heats that sting—
A world deprived of dreaming,
Forbidden to strive or sing,
Tortured with splendid urgings,
Bound on a simmering pyre,
From shriveling sands to last peak's vergings—
Southeast of Heart's Desire.

The glades are parched and bloated,
By the salt and sickening air;
And the pools where a lily gloated
Are desolate-dry and bare.
The sneaking winds are voiceless
And lurk in the sullen run.
The dust-whirls, pooling noiseless
Circle up to the sun.
Skeletons once that wandered
Lie bleached by many a pack
At the goal of a life ill-squandered,
A rude prospector's shack.
And the sunbeams rift and falter
And wince in the cruel fire,
For truth lies sacrificed on an altar
Southeast of Heart's Desire.

ON THE HEIGHTS

It seemed I had known you forever when I met you alone in the dusk.
You had fled to my Garden of Dreams and Illusions, leaving your
Gods at play.
We met and we wandered afar in the scent of the roses and musk
And gazed from the cliffs to the half-lights below where a sleeping
sea-village lay.
And up to the cliffs came a song of the shore and you spoke of a joy
that was thine.
Out of the harbor a sailor sang as the night drew down on the sea.
Over the moorlands the white fogs fell and the night-wind wooed in
the pine
As you, like a sundown wanderer, came out of the dusk to me.
And after I kissed you, you leaned on my breast and spoke your sweet
trifles to me—
I said "It is true—we always have loved," without even knowing
just why.—
And even today in my Garden of Dreams I hear your innocent plea—
"Oh love me forever—you always have loved me—and Love surely
never can die."

THE MAN ON THE STAGE WHO LEARNED THAT HE WAS A BAD ACTOR

Them's Stage-Days here in Blue Bird, an' the year of 'Eight-Three;
When Jake McGinnis chucks his lines an' gets the drammer bee;
It's full three days before the stage resumes to Lower Nine;
But Jake has held theatrickuls, an' Blue Bird's feelin' fine.

Which everything begins the day these Blue Bird haunts of ours
Is blessed to see a passin' show, entitled, "Weeds and Flowers!"
Supposed to be by Shakespeare—(But it's by some yellow jack;
You buy the same in Jericho, done up in paper back.)

The same concerns an orfling girl, a villyan an' his maw,
Conspirin' for to rob the girl; but twixt them steps the law;
An' muffles up the villyan's mamm, an' chucks 'em both in jail;
The orfling safely finds her love; an' thereby ends a tale.

As unconcerned as custards, Jake sits against the wall
Throughout the hull performance an' chaws his backy-ball.
He's deeply meditatatin', an' when the show is gone away,
Jake—he's achieved the drammer bee, an' swears he'll write a play.

For nigh a day he meditates, the when he wakes his powers
An' writes a throbbin' drammer round the grocery store at Bowers'.
It's all complete (except it's farce—though Jake don't seem to
care)
So next night Jake's presentin' it, an' all of Blue Bird's there.

Old Flinsy comes from Lower Nine to act the villyan's part.
Dave Whimpler does the hero, an' Sue Bretty wins his heart;
Jake fits in for a lawyer sport, who steals Sue's wod of dirt:
An' everything is fixed up bad,—Jake's done things mighty pert.

They's parts, though, in a drammer where it's mighty had to act
An' down toward the end of things pore Jake's bright genius lacked.

An' so the climax has a skunk who busts in on affairs
An' by predestination things might take some sudden airs.

When it comes time for this same phase, Jake has all cards prepared.

An' Little Britt slings in a cat; which everyone is scared
Because it's painted mighty true a skunkish white and black;
An' has a mighty pale streak down the middle of its back.

It's shorely some commotion; but Tomms from Brittle Pine
Gets up an' calls the house to kinks an' swears all's by design;
Which sometime lately Jake was seen to paint Magruder's cat—
An' well! They's minds in Blue Bird that's conclusive after that.

Somebody yanks the curtain down an' ruffles up the stage;
Defrauded-like—as some one says—an' everything's a rage.
An' Jake gets hammered for his pains, (which no one seems to
mind,
As how this Jake's the only man the Stage Days leaves behind.)

An' then Magruder sees the joke, an' swears it's just a show;
An' Jake's pronounced a monarch such as footlights don't much
know;
But the bunch is heaps of grumbles, though some humor's in be-
tween;
An' the episode's concluded where Jake can't write a scene.

Which goes to show that when a man has got the drammer bee
A cultivated audience is mighty proud to see;
But hates to be defrauded by an actor who is punk;—
Though they'll take your joke in earnest if it really ain't a skunk.

FAME

Upwards with me through the vistas of glory!
Soar from the dust to the cloud's lightest breath!
Wreath thee the epic, the saga, the story,
Preening a rondel that jests upon death!
Rise from the throng and the frivols they cherish!
Swift be thy journey, though bitter the trail!
Struggle and crush, lest thou palter and perish!
Conquer thou must, that the world know thy tale!

Up, with a song to the stars in thy gladness!
Lift on the wings of a fluttering hope!
Clear be thy vision, berefted of madness,
Keening thy footstep, lest, stumbling, thou grope!
Banish the glamour that lures thee to revel!
Laugh lest the jesting of death blind thy soul!
Mount in thy main from the turmoil, life's level!—
Blind to the obstacle, press thy goal!

Firm be thy love to thy soul's loving master!
Cherish and heed; I shall guide thee thy way!
Lifting thy spirit to realms that are vaster,
Easing the toil of thy arduous day.
Toil be thy romance! and peril, they pleasure!
I, thy reward, and thy goal that allures!
Derelict thou, till I gild thee with treasure!
Moulding thy fortune that ever endures!

Then when the struggle is over and ended,
I by my fingers have lovingly writ!
Keen to thy arrow thy vision has bended,
Piercing the stars from the sweat of the pit!
Look! for thy toil I have blessed thee, and lifted,
Out of false airs thou art fitfully whirled;—
Gleaned from thy clay, worthy harvests are rifted:
Thou art proclaimed to the end of the world!

LOVE IN THE HEATHER

We wandered, when the sun was low,
Ere nightfall touched the heather;
We loitered on the cliff's edge,
As lovers wait the moon;
We waded through the windswept sedge
That rustled on the dune
We wandered in the magic glow
Of the crimson sunset weather.

We drifted where the daisies grew
On hillsides, white with clover:
I plucked the sacred-scented flowers,
And flung them in your hair—
A garland from sweet bowers
Soft days had mothered there,
While lonesome winds from ocean blew,
Sweeping the gay clouds over.

And many words of love we spoke,
And many dreams we cherished—
Dear broken dreams of long-ago,
Dead dreams that mocked our hearts;
And all the while the west aglow
With evening's magic arts,
Till sunset's golden barrier broke,
And day's white guardsmen perished.

Then, as the weary day was done,
And dusk drew on the heather,
We tracked along the narrow path
That fronts the ragged steep,
Where petty herdsmen showered their wrath
On bands of stubborn sheep,
And wandered home by the cattle-run
Over crimson downs together.

MAUREEN

When the dusk is on the shore, and the screaming swallows soar,
Comes a voice from out the breakers, and it seems to mock the sea;
"Mourn for her!" it seems to say "Mourn for her," and dies away.
Methinks a wail is in the wind and calling out to me,
Like a starling in the night peers the yellow beacon light;
Down the shore the inlet murmurs; up the cliff the shorebell rings;
And the ships blow up the breen, to the wharfage by the green;
As fisherman a-homing braves the tempest while he sings—
 (But the moon gleams lone on cold Corone,
 And the surges moan, "Maureen!")

Dimly chimes the vesper bell in the chapel down the dell;
Faintly lilts a lonely singer up the cliffs against the town.
But forever from the shores comes a wailing that implores;—
Methinks I hear a voice that lures, and lures me down and down,
Down and down and ever downward beyond the glowing town,
As the gloaming draws its curtain on the tempest and the sea;
And it seems in dreams I go to the fisherdock below
And find a little ship that waits along the wharf for me.
 (But the moon gleams lone on cold Corone,
 And the surges moan, "Maureen!")

Swift in sail I waltz away, down the ever-singing bay:
It is tempest on the waters and the billows wrest and rave.
But I sail across the bar, down toward the west afar;
And, heeling on the stinging blast, nor sheet nor mast I save.
Full in sail, and ever on, forth I sail to greet the dawn—
Still the tempest on the waters, and the land afar from view!
Sailing free, I brave the west, keen and careless on my quest;
And everywhere around me dash the turbid wastes of blue.
 (But the moon gleams lone on cold Corone,
 And the surges moan, "Maureen!")

High above me yawns the sky, sculling, toppling, racing by;
Giddylike the raincloud spatters, and my decks are drenching wet.
Like a lusty steed I race, down the never ending wastes...

A bleeding heart of sun spurts up the dawning's parapet.
Like a shambles reeks the sea; wrottled waters wrest them free
For a moment dies the tempest—and methinks I see a face.
"I am lost," she cries aloud; then the tempest drops its shroud—
"O, save me while thou mayest," she is calling down the wastes.
(But the moon gleams lone on cold Corone,
And the surges moan, "Maureen!")

"Come to me," she seems to say, but the tempest rages grey;
(Could I face the blatant turmoil? Ah, my ship would pay the cost.)
"Come, to me; 'tis I, Maureen! Dost remember thou the green
Where once we roamed as lovers when the summer-tide was tost?
When the starlings laughed above—canst thou 'call thou saidst thy
love?"...
(I could hear her, sighing, crying.) "Turn thy ship, and come to
me."

Yet I slackened not my sail, only raced before the gale
And on, and ever onward, danced my galley down the sea.
(But the moon gleams lone on cold Corone,
And the surges moan, "Maureen!")

Hour on hour, the tempest roared, hour on hour her voice implored.
More and more each hour it clutched me, like a talon, at my heart!
"Turn thy prow," it seemed to say; "Thou didst vow to make me
gay!

Yet thou hast dashed thy promise like the coward that thou art!"
Ever louder grew the plea, ever mocking, shaming me;
"Ah," said I, "will yet she call me! Shall I turn to find her still?"
"Aye!" the tempest seemed to sob "Find her now, whom thou didst
rob!

A pledge or promise broken is an omen boding ill."
(But the moon gleams lone on cold Corone,
And the surges moan, "Maureen!")

So I turned against the gale, and I stemmed it with my sail;

Yet no more her voice would call me—and I cried for her in vain.
“Come to me,” I cried to her; but the waters seemed to purr

A rune of death and broken hearts across the lonely main.
“Call no more,” the billows sighed; “She is lost beneath the tide!

Like a cask of precious treasure, she is sunk beneath the wave;
Call for her no more!” they wept; down once more the tempest
swept—

And though I stood against the blast, she rose not from her grave.
(But the moon gleams lone on cold Corone,
And the surges moan, “Maureen!”)

Lonely hours I stayed about, filled the tempest with my shout,
“Ah, I know thee now,” I shouted— “Come, and let us seek the
shore!

Ah, I loved thee well and true: ’twas not I was false to you!

Maureen, Maureen, O come to me; I’ll bear thee grief no more!
Thou wert mine upon the green when the ships blew up the breen;
I am thine to do thy bidding—call to me, and I shall come!”—

But alas, I called in vain, for the tempest and the main
Had swept her down forever; so I faced the lights of home.
(But the moon gleams lone on cold Corone,
And the surges moan, “Maureen!”)

And to night she seems to say, “Come to me—love guides the way!

On the sea of life I shatter, and the tempests do me harm!
From the haven far I fail—on the waters breaks a gale.”

Methinks I hear a wailing high above the buoy’s alarm.
Lonelily, the haven gleams, and the yellow beacon beams,—
Down the shore the seawinds mutter, up the cliffs the seagulls
sweep—

“Come to me!” the waters preen; and the ships blow up the breen—
But the fingers of a tempest clutch the bosom of the deep.
(And the moon gleams lone on Cold Corone,
And the surges moan, “Maureen!”)

A SONG OF SUMMER

Summer has come to my music, and me.
Mirth reigns supreme in the heart of the bee,
 Bidding, "Make merry;
 Seek the far, airy,
Gnome-haunted downs, or the tremulous lea."

Perfumed winds blow from the South's open door.
High in the asure the swift swallows soar;
 Summer is saying,
 "Go ye far, maying,
Seeking the downs, 'twixt the sunlands and shore."

Over the moorland, and over the lea,
A wind of remembrance sweeps in from the sea;
 And the heart of a fairy
 In argosies airy
Bears back the ghosts of dead summers to me.

For the gay lute of romance, awake with a vow,
In chorus diurnal is beckoning now
 With songs of a lureland
 That lies down the moorland,
Where vanity dreams 'neath the blossomy bough.

Far on the downs, where the shores kiss the sea,
And the song echoes back up the wastes of the lea,
 Bland summer caresses
 Away our distresses,
And bids us be blithe as the heart of the bee.

THE PICNIC AT BLUE BIRD

When Miss Sophy has a birthday, it's a gay old time in camp.
Little Britt don't see the difference if it is a splash of damp;
An' indeed they's hard rain fallin', like a placer miner's hose—
But we all declares a picnic, an' the whole of Blue Bird goes.

If you're ever up to Blue Bird, take a saunter to the spring,
Where it bounces down the landscape with a sudden sort of swing,
An' goes washing by the ridges like a boulder down a draw,
Which you'll see the finest spot a Blue Bird picnic ever saw.

Sophy wears her white kimony, an' it's plastered up with flowers—
Blue Bird Jim has brought it to her from the grocerystore at Bowers';
An' it sure befits the lady who is prancin' down the trail.
Little Britt an' Dirk is proud ones—Little Britt, he hums a scale.

Well! the Butchers come from Tonguestead, an' the Popes from Lower
Nine.

Whimplers' folks runs in from Jericho, an' Tomms from Brittle Pine;
Which it's quite a family gatherin'—Blue Bird don't much see them
things!
An' the singin' kid from Fowlers hops up a tree an' sings.

Which it's in the midst of luncheon, an' his notes acts kind of cross.
First he warbles like a magpie; next he whinnies like a hoss!
An' it sounds a heap partic'lar as he wants to raise a row;
So we ups an' grabs him gently an' removes him from the bough|

Turkey Fratters from the placers tries to give a speech on Law;
Which he mentions bonds of usury—(Such things he never saw!)
An' he jolts the fine distinctions with a rabid sort of whish!
So we settles his maneuvers with a half-full gravy dish.

Well, this Fratters—he's some ambled, an' he's rattled as a pig.
So he scoots up on the table (Which the same ain't strong or big);
An' politely down it tumbles, so we fixes up a gag,
An' crams his face with mustard, an' holds it with a rag.

Then we totes him to the river, where the spring just bubbles in,
Which he souses him for churchtime, an' it shorely is a sin!
Then we rips the bag clear open an' removes the gag an' cloth
So he shorely spits the mustard an' his guzzle in a froth.

Mike McGinn, who runs the levels, thinks a speech ain't out of place;
Fingle Wilson makes the motion; but he gets hit in the face
With a soft-inclin' doughnut; an' they's heaps of batter flies—
Wilson looks as sly as groundhogs, an' scarce believes his eyes.

Well—McGinn, he doesn't say much, but his words is shore direct,
An' is mighty fundamental in the ways of intellect;
Which he says, "Our love for Blue Bird is the same it is for Crow,
As we never gets enough of, an' we wants the world to know!"

Little Britt, he pops the question: "Is a picnic all complete,
If they ain't no gentle dancing'?" So we ups an' ons our feet;
An' we starts the Ol' Virginny; which the music is by Dutch,
Who intrudes a jews-harp overture that pleases plenty much.

After while it starts to pour down, an' they's none of us is turned
To await a gentle soakin', so we gets ourselves adjourned;
An' we dashes up the canyon like a herd of skittered sheep,
Gettin' wet as any chicken as was rained on in his sleep.

Finally we gets to Blue Bird; an' it rains in torrents now.
Little Britt, an' Dirk, an' Sophy all is howlin' at the row!
But Miss Sophy is declarin' she is past the year of eight;
An' we wants to see her nine so bad we really hates to wait!

HARVEST

Among these fields the sheaves of harvest lie
Where toilers reaped them in the autumn-mist;
A purple haze veils up from land and sky,
Claret and blue and azure-amethyst.
Leaves fallen lie in rifts and ranks,
Tinted of crimson, where the summer bled;
My heart uplifts: I utter reverent thanks:
These are but leaves lie dead!

Grim fancies haunt me as I linger here
Of other lands, where webs of war are spun,
Of bosoms bleached in sorrowment austere:
The bleeding cost of battle brusquely done!
Men fallen lie in rifts and ranks,
Tured by the share beneath the plowman's tread;—
My heart uplifts: I utter reverent thanks:
These are not men lie dead!

Leaves are not men, yet both of earth are born;
To each comes birth and fulness and decay:
A breath of God on dust at early morn,
At dusk, life's sunset in its breathless clay!
So these twain harvests lie in ranks:
These sheaves—those men by battle bled;
My heart uplifts: I utter reverent thanks:
Leaves here—not men—lie dead!

INVOCATION

City, city, thou art holy; I, thy minstrel—this, my lay!
(Mould in me thy master-singer: thou be potter, I—the clay!)

City, city, thou art holy, witching through the night to me,
Blaring forth thy trysting voices, striving, singing in my soul!
Sayest thou: "Unveil thy spirit! Loose the lyre that lives in thee!"
City, city, thou art holy; canst thou make my young heart whole?

Up to me thy beacons gleaming! Up to me thy dim-hushed lay:
Songs of industry and labor, fondly murmured to my heart!
Shall thy gorgeous burst of beauty ever fade and die away?
Shall thy daring dreams of glory ever vanish from thy mart?

City, all thy dreams are faded; all thy flowers droop with dust!
(Man reviled thee; God forgot thee; yet I love thee all, entire!)
I would lude my song to bless thee in thy gracious joy and lust:
Fold me, mould me, to thy glory! Wake me to thy desire!

Down the gray abyss of ages, ere the hopes of man unveil,
And his epic fades forgotten in a more eternal Thing,
City, city, I, thy minstrel, would enchant thee with my tale;
I would free thee, bond and burden: thou but bid me—I should
sing!

Be thou merciful, O City! I am weak; yet thou, O pray,
Be my worthy master-moulder: thou be potter, I—the clay!

THE LIGHT OF OTHER DAYS

I wandered away from the village to the schoolhouse that lurks in
the glen,
And I thought how the dear years had vanished, and in childhood—
how gay we were, then!
And I came to the hill where the master had schooled us to honor's
first vow;—
But the kindly old master is sleeping in the churchyard just over
the brow.

I strolled to the brook in the pasture where it sang when the summers
were blue,
And we plucked us the big scented daisies with the rapture our in-
fancy knew,
And I sat 'neath the gnarly old hawthorn, with the names that
we carved on its bough,
And fell thinking of dear ones, there, sleeping in the churchyard,
so peacefully now!

I roamed on the heights where the reapers were gleaning their ripen-
ing grain
And I thought how we squandered our childhood in a longing that
vexed us in vain;
—But it seemed joy was gone from the hilltop, yet whither, I knew
not, nor how;
And the past with its bliss all lay buried in the churchyard just
over the brow.

I came to the cot of the sexton, and the chapel that hides up the lane
And I thought how the bells of the sunset rang out as the daylight
would wane;
But the roof of the cottage is fallen, and the winter rain seeps in
the mow,
As it seeps in the grave of the sexton, on the hill, in the churchyard,
there, now.

I sang where of old we had revelled, but something was gone from
the song,
And the pleasure seemed slain in my spirit, and remorsefulness lingered too long;
But I thought I could hear the old laughter; and it comes to me tenderly now,
And I dance on the hill with the comrades that are sleeping just over the brow.

There only is grief in the village, and a dream of old places I trod
Comes, drawing me nearer and nearer full-span to the bosom of God;
But my prayers never waver nor falter, for I know when the dust I endow,
There'll be rest there my spirit has wished for, and a solace my rest shall allow.

I think how the past has all faded, of a yesterday perished and fled
And I dream of the chums of my childhood,—how so many are vanished and dead;—
But, ah! as my memories waken, what treasure of joy they endow,
For I know we shall be reunited in the churchyard just over the brow.

“?”

Supreme in hearts of holy men one lonely creed may chance.
Another heart adores no less, yet does no creed advance.
To utter all the living fire of rapture in the breast
Is God's sublimest sophistry, and more than all the rest.

WIMMEN AIN'T CARDS

I sat on a stool with a mug of brew, and never was saying a word;
And there at the table the stranger talked and all that he said I heard.

He stacked his cards,
And winked at his pards
And hummed an ode from the olden bards;
But I never stirred from my mug of brew—
Still I wisht I could know what the stranger knew.

On his nose was a wart; on his hip was a gun;
But he didn't have either for frolic, for fun;
His face was hard, and his voice was low,
But just why they were I never did know!
When the stakes were made, the gambler smirked,
But the stranger grinned, and his eyebrows worked;
When the cards were dealt, the stranger howled,
And the gambler frowned, but the dealer scowled.
Their eyes were daggers that stabbed and shone,
While the stranger talked in an undertone

And stacked his cards,
And winked at his pards
And hummed an ode from the olden bards;
But I never stirred from my mug of brew—
Still I wisht I could know what the stranger knew.

When the play began the stranger shrugged,
And the gambler grunted, and the dealer looked juggled.
The stranger snarled through a black grimace,
And a flush of scarlet came over his face.
And then I saw what you won't believe:
The gambler reached in the dealer's sleeve
For a queen of spades, which the very same
The stranger now held in the selfsame game!

But the stranger saw, and his fingers spun,
And quick as a sunflash he gripped for his gun,
And the livid lead like a sluice-head run,
And the gambler lost, and the stranger won,
And the shots rang out like a cannon's roar,
And the gambler staggered across the floor,
And stumbled dead through the open door;
But the stranger smiled at the things he'd done,
 And stacked his cards,
 And winked at his pards
 And hummed an ode from the olden bards;
But I never stirred from my mug of brew—
Still I wisht I could know what the stranger knew.

For he says, "It ain't that I give a curl—
But the queen of spades is a bad old girl!
I tried my hand—as the gambler did—
But our dates gets mixed on the same little kid,
And it's matter of fact that somebody dies,"
And I saw they was brains in the stranger's eyes.
He cocked his heels on the table, there,
And chattered away, with sense to spare;
And, says he: "It's bad; but if wimmen was cards,
They wouldn't be hard of solution, eh, pards?
But wimmen ain't cards, and a man can't say,
If she's lookin' at two when her love's which way,"
And he scratches his head, and raises his brows,
And the same was thin as a garret louse,
Yet he orders up drinks for all the house.
 And stacked his cards,
 And winked at his pards
 And hummed an ode from the olden bards;
But I never stirred from my mug of brew—
Still I wisht I could know what the stranger knew.

A YOUNG MAN'S WILL

When passions grief makes tender
 To bless a dying hour
Compel one to surrender
 The summer and the flower,
And young hearts gayer cherish
 The treasures each must leave
When childish prides must perish
 And youth has learned to grieve—
Then, in those precious revels,
 Which make last moments sweet,
Ere beauty's temple levels,
 To lie at ruin's feet
Gay youth confutes the sadness
 That dared old hours to blight
And pays its vows of gladness
 To lend anew delight.
Like one upon the highway,
 Relentless in his youth,
Who seeks the silent byway
 Where death reveals its truth
And leaves to those who tarry
 The pleasures of the mart,
Surrender I the fairy,
 Sweet fortunes of my heart.

I thought my life eternal—
 I found it but a day!
Though revelry supernal
 Has lingered on my way!
Yet all the joys of living
 That blest my merry hours,
Once more to youth I'm giving—
 My dreams, the fields, the flowers.

The loves that deigned to meet me
Amid the autumn-dusk
In fond procession greet me,
Bereft of all save husk;
On fancy's pyre I burn them
In memory's incense flame
Unto youth's Gods, who yearn them,—
Gay Gods, from whence they came!
And so, to memory's wassail
I lift a toast to bless
Life's all-sufficing vassal,
Love's dream of tenderness;
Yet death shall revel on it—
Love's genial dream must die!
And youth shall dare to pawn it
For dust in which to lie.

And so these fancies wither;
And ancient dreams expire;
Fond memory bears them hither—
Endearing to my lyre;
And through their nameless legions
In dreams afar I tread
To haunt the shameless regions
Wherein repose the dead.
I glimpse forgotten faces,
Old eyes, with joy aglow,
As once, in cherished places,
I saw them long ago.
Like elfish forms they revel,
Like lurid ghouls they leap—
And so my dreams dishevel,
And so—I fall asleep:
A sleep that knows no ending,
Nor dream, perchance, nor care,
Where every hour goes lending

The tenderness of prayer.
And so, alas! I leave you—
Yet grant me no regret,
Nor let my passing grieve you:
Oblige me to forget.

So through my heart's belongings,
As I their symbols seek,
Regrets and ancient wrongings
Their noisome woes bespeak—
But deaf to their appealingings,
Without reserve or lack,
With somber, sober feelings,
I now return them back.
Thus, if, within your musings,
Bare grief should mock your heart,
Or doubt, too self-accusing,
Should rend your faith apart,
Let not your joy grow fretful—
Remember sacredly
The reveries regretful
Perchance that troubled me.
For I in sweet compassion
Return to youth once more
In due regretful fashion,
The joys young men adore.
May this, my aimless madness,
Your meditations ease!
May you in life find gladness,
As I in death find peace!

ELEGY WRITTEN IN AUTUMN WOODS

When summer dies and fades, and winds of autumn blow
Strange yearnings strive, and unrest burns in me,
And so to wander in the solitudes I go,
Resigned to reverie.

I take the olden paths that I was wont to tread,
And croon old airs I used to cherish sweet,
Trampling the crimsoned leaves, where frost-slain summer bled,
Beneath my truant feet.

Across the wastes that glow, my morbid fancies brawl,
Among the ruins of the vernal June,
Where lie plain-written destinies for man and all,
About my journey strewn.

A mottled, frost-stained leaf, blotched like a leper's hand,
Wings from a twig, and flutters in my way,
And with its sudden vision bids me understand
Where passeth yesterday.

For yesterday is gone, with all its merry train;
Tomorrow soon the selfsame path shall tread,
(That oft our hearts would stay, but all, alas! in vain!—)
And with old dreams lie dead.

And with them, lifeless, there, the poet with his lines,
The mason with the stone he shapes and cleaves,
Shall be death's usury; for ever life resigns,
Even as these autumn leaves.

Earth is their sepulture; the winds shall be their dirge;
Snow and spring-garlands shall enwreath them, there;
Song shall not stir their hearts, nor joyous romance urge,
Nor shall they cringe with care.

Nor on their withered lips shall carols gay be born;
Nor blithing birds disturb their slumber's bond;—
A chapel chimes shall sing its dreary dole at morn,
Yet these shall not respond.

And so life fades and goes, and I, as these, shall pass,
Lamented-well, and mourned-for in my clay;
Turfed in unhallowed dust, the scented summer grass
Above my head shall sway.

A passing breeze a lonely paeon may complain,
For my dumb ears, that shall not heed its woe;
Loved ones shall linger nigh, and call for me in vain,
To sing, as long ago.

And every bleeding sunset that slew its west for me
Shall dine its lovegod in dead day's druid gore,
Lighting its beacons 'round the ghastly summer sea,
Down ragged wastes of shore;

Of nights, a jewel-star will glimmer through its cloud—
A lovemoon wash the hilltop's cloven dross,
And leer askance my grave, where winter veils my shroud—
Yet shall these rue my loss?

And every dawn, dewsoaked, and bleak, and gleaming pale,
Shall light these woods, and spangle with its kiss,
The hyacinth, the jonquil of fairy-flowered vale...
Nor shall I know their bliss.

Immortal day shall burn, immortal night shall fall—
Yet not for my scant ruin-scattered brain!
For me a spring-bird, far across the dales shall call—
Yet call—alas!—in vain!

On wasting mounds of dust the winter rains will fall ;
From niggard turf spring violets will creep ;
The summer suns will warm my senseless, songless pall,
And autumn winds will weep.

Yet that were recompense for what the dead has earned :
A toiler's wage for him that labored well :
A goal for pulsing clay, wherein ambition burned :
A prayer at evening bell !

And I, who tarry here, to sing my little while,
What shall I be? Shall mine be rest in sod?
Or shall I soar from dust to greet the joyous smile
Of one that was my God?

For what I sing, methinks, is not this thing men see,
And I who sing am more than trodden clay :
Meseems who seraph-sings this idle elegy
Mounts to a Higher Way !

Although no Destined Star, perchance, reward my path,
But only wincing dust men stalk upon,
Still through my winnowed clay shall Nature soothe her wrath,
With fonder symbols drawn.

Methinks the brotherhood that life has cleft and kept
Shall make men kinsmen in the craven clay,
And consecrate the loam, where rueless life has crept,
And bless dead hates away :

That in their path shall come a newer clan and kin,
And these shall pass, throughout predestined years,
And others come to stray, where these so blithe have been,
And pass, as they, in tears :

That from the dust each birth sublimer life shall brew—
That better hearts, abate more full and free,
(Burning with love-remembered each life's ashes knew,
Those other years,) shall be.

Crude is my elegy, uncouth each word and thought,
And like old paths, and those that tread, shall pass;
Though little rue have I, if in its truths be taught
How death holds life's hourglass!

Ah, if my clay in that of worthier hearts and hands
Shall come to mingle, and with love be blest,
Fostering a master-heart, that truly understands—
Then mine shall rest content!

TO THE WILLAMETTE

Beloved River, thou, as I, art bound upon an endless way;
Hush, River, sing thy song no more—Leap on, O River—I must stay.
For sunset comes, and close of day, and darkness to the hills, and me;
And I but tarry by thy shore; yet thou shalt ever find the sea!

Beleaguered wanderers, far from home, upon thy cliffs have sung of
thee.
Bards along thy flashing foam turn merry dream to poesy.
Thy brink, O River, guards from me the golden fervor of a rhyme,
Thy rills have held in secrecy beyond all men throughout all time.

A NIGHT IN PARADISE

Christmas Night in the uplands, and the hills are white with snow.
Eagle Pass dreams in silence in the moonlight's silver glow
And Old Man Slavin is telling a tale of the long-ago.

Were you ever lost in a loneliness, where nothing is near but peaks,
And never a sign in the hills but snow, and a gale that screams and
 shrieks,

When the wind let loose in a basky blow, till the shaggies froze and
 whined,

And the snows veiled down in the biting air and the coldness made
 you blind,

And your herds went wild and ran away and froze, when the light
 was dim,

And you lost your sheep and your pardner? That was how I lost Jim.

We were running herd in Paradise, where the range had a duster of
 grass.

We had quit for the night and had a fire, and the sheep ran loose in
 the pass.

The hut leaked wind, but the sun was down, and the snows ran piling
 high—

But there wasn't a thing at all we could do, but stand for it, Jim
 and I.

Not a task that everyone likes to turn, but strictly against the grain!
We shivered and shook, and rattled our teeth, and the wind cried over
 the plain.

I heard Jim say: Lay down and sleep: no use to stay up all night!"
I told him, "No!" But the first I knew the moon got to shining bright.
I was out in a land that you never saw and nobody else has seen,
Where everything was ice and snow, with never a thing left green.
I saw a cabin across the hills, and a sheepfold under a ledge,
Where a little brook ran bubbling down and chimed its way through
 the sedge.

Nothing at all to do but look, and nothing at all to say.
The snowdrifts stretched like fields of wheat, and the pines were
shocks of hay.

Out in the snow was a little lost lamb, bleating, alone in the cold,
But the rest of the flock were under the hill, snuggling safe in the
fold.

Up at the cabin there opened a door, and I saw a face peer through
And put a hand up over its eyes, the way the hillmen do.

He sighted the lamb out in the night, and closed the door behind,
And struggled toward me along a ridge through the gloom a moon
made blind.

Soon he was down in a little draw, where the teeth of the wind cut
sharp,

And the wind came singing across the barrens, chansoning like a harp.
It sounded like music from angel-land, and I listened, and heard it
blow—

But out in the drifts was the call of the lamb, lost in the fleering snow.

Then a storm swept up, like a charmer's veil, and hurtled along the
flaw.

Over the hills the cabin-light grew dim, and along the draw
I watched a gust in the dancing moon, and the snows spun piling-deep,
And I saw the hillman stagger around and grope for the whining
sheep.

But the snow came thick, and blinded me, so I tried to think my way,
But my head dried up; and I tried to shout, but never a word could
I say.

The gusts sighed by, and the tempests cleared, but the plains were
level and bare—

Then something suddenly waked me, like a hand in the raw night air.
Over my feet was a whirl of snow, but I lifted myself to my feet.
The fire was as cold as a cinder; and the pass was as smooth as a
sheet.

Over my head was a blanket, and the floor of the hut was white,
With nothing around me but whiteness, and the wind gone mad in
the night!

I called to Jim in the silence, but I did not get a reply.
In the east was dawning morning, and the hills sparked up to the sky.
Nothing for me, but to find my pard! And I did—in a heap in the
pass.

There in his arms was a frozen lamb; but his eyes were shiny as glass.
Just a good-hearted man of the hills! That was the way with him!
But I always have kept that blanket: you see, it belonged to Jim.

Christmas Night in the uplands, and the valleys glare with snow,
And Old Man Slavin is telling by the yulelog's merry glow
This tale of a simple herdsman I tell that you may know.

DESERT LOVE

I loved too well, and in my loving lost!
For she had never loved me; and my own
Was but a false desire that left me,
Bleeding, and alone, upon life's desert!

Last night, she called to me.
I lay alone beneath the stars,
The purple dusk about;
Deep desolation, everywhere;
And somewhere, off, afar,
Her pleading voice entreated mine
To answer: "I forgive—forget!"

She called but once, and then was gone
For ever! And yet down in my heart I know
The many times that she has called;
Nor, hoping aught but jest,
Has tarried for reply in vain.

O man! To crush a heart, and have that heart
To beg of thee, thy own forgiveness!

LITTLE BRITT

I suppose we're shy on manners, as we eats most with our knife;
An' we ain't as wise as some folks, an' don't know much of life;
But, as Blue Bird Jim was sayin', we kin gamble quite a bit
We knows angels when we sees 'em, an' one is Little Britt.

Now his paw is Old Man Britt, which he ain't ever had a wife;
But he's been a missionary, preachin' Gospel all his life;—
An' his maw is Mother Peets, what ran the PARLER HOWSE
CAFAY;
Which she never has a husband, but has the winnin' way.

We ain't speakin' of relations, for this Old Man Britt's a MAN;
An' Mother Peets is gold clear through, an' heapin' in the pan;
An' it's Old Man Britt's fust backslide; so the kid grows up in
camp,
An' they's not a cussed miner don't love the darlin' scamp.

When Old Man Britt gets in a drift, an' obsequies was said,
This Little Britt ain't got no paw we knows of but is dead;
Maw Peets has leery tremers, an' her brain don't much respond:
When Little Britt is goin' four, she seeks the hills beyond.

Sir, it's sure a pure plumb picnic when this kid fust has a fight;
Which it's out in front the PARLER HOWSE, an' shorely some de-
light!
An' it's for a gal named Sophy, where they're playin' in the road;
An' Little Britt, he licks young Dirk as perky as a toad.

But of course this feud ain't lastin'; so it ain't much time to wait
Till Little Britt, an' Sophy, an' young Dirk is pardners straight;
An' they ain't much better cronies as a miner cares to see
Than Little Britt an' Sophy, an' young Dirk appears to be.

Now, it's sort of up-between-us Little Britt ain't for to know
That his standards don't go 'paydirt as most people likes to show;
Which we swars it on our whiskey, an' it's level in the cup;—
Though we sorts of sets to wonderin' who he'll be when he grows
up.

Once, up in the EGGLE DANCE HAWL, when Little Britt is five,
Eight or nine of us is gamblin', peddlin' pitch to beat a hive,
When Old Pitcher, who is losin', makes the innocent remark
He won't keep our little secret any longer in the dark.

He is edgin' off some cautious, an' we asks him what he means;
An' he points out in the alley: Little Britt is there in jeans!
Which he ain't much more 'n said it than we has him by the ears,
An' out into the thurrerfare, an' stripped to runnin' gears.

Someone prowls a feather pillow from inside the PARLER HOWSE.
So we heats some tar for Pitcher, an' gives him quite a souse;
An' we rolls him in the feathers, which is quite profuse in strain,
Kind of sick it ain't a hangin'; for his actions is a pain.

Well, of course, it's some commotion; an' this Little Britt, he comes,
An' Sophy, an' young Dirk, an' sees Old Pitcher do his sums;—
Pitcher looks a bit unpleasant, an' he rattles like the roop:
Our Little Britt, he grins an' says, "Ain't Pitcher cute for soup?"

For weeks Old Pitcher's might good, an' Little Britt just grows;
But somehow we gets inklin's this orfling sort' of knows;
Which it makes days nights in Blue Bird, and we ain't much heart
to talk;
Though we kind of thinks it's Pitcher, an' watch him like a hawk.

Now Miss Sophy, she loves Little Britt, an' so it keeps us blue,
For we wonders if she'll love him if she ever learns what's true.
An' Little Britt loves Sophy lots, an' young Dirk does the same;
But Little Britt ain't born just right—an' no one much to blame!

Well, one day, back last September; (an' it's dry as bones in camp!)—
Little Britt, he has a birthday, so we takes ourselves a lamp,
An' we goes 'way down in Blue Bird, where they ain't the light of
day;
Which we only works the same because it's mighty pink with pay.

This bein' Little Britt's fust trip, Miss Sophy goes along.
Young Dirk is there for company, though by all rules it's wrong;
An' we're walkin' close to Pitcher, which he's stubborn as a fool,
An' he's tipsy on the diggin's; which it's square against the rule!

All of sudden Pitcher's crazy, an' he knocks our lamp away;
An' he starts for Little Britt—But, sir, we feels the whole mine sway;
Which the next we knows it's daylight,—an' I'm layin' on a ledge,
An' it's smoke an' fire around me—so I looks down off the edge.

Little Britt has got Miss Sophy, an' he's pulled her out the mine.
He's lugged young Dirk, too, out the place; an' sure it's mighty fine:
He's all burnt up an' bleedin', but he ain't no mind to quit.
He lays Dirk down, an' back he goes down in the mine, does Britt.

I gets up, an' kind of staggers, an' edges down the pit;
An' pretty soon I finds them there, an' hears this Little Britt,
An' Pitcher, there, conversin'—all I sees is Pitcher's head;
An' Pitcher says, "Forgive me, Britt—I lied!" an' falls off dead.

Well, the mine is like a furnace, but we gets 'em out the place.
Old Pitcher's dead an' quiet; Britt is clinkered in the face!
Dirk an' Sophy looks like cinders: otherways, they's mostly right,
An' we manages to save 'em; but Our Britt, he dies, that night.

Just before he dies he asks me if the wust of things was true;
An' we lies, an' says they wasn't; for what else was we to do?
But says Britt, "I guess it's true, boys; Sophy's yours for keeps,
now, Dirk!"—
So he toddles off to heaven, an' we shambles back to work.

They's no preachers up in Blue Bird—Sophy says they ain't enough!
An' we ain't none on religion, so they're buried in the rough.
But they's one thing true as daylight—an we'll lay a heap on it—
When we shakes hands with the angels, we'll shake with Little
Britt.

THAT WOMAN YOU MEET

Sometimes when you meet a strange woman, nor matters much how,
or the place,

There's something that seizes your innermost fancies, and conquers
the fort of your heart!

All citadels fall at the hand that she lends, when she taunts with her
maidenly ways,

And always you like to be scholarly lover, though distance has
borne you apart.

She need not be nun, nor even a sinner: perhaps she has lost at her
cards!

There may be a curse on her heart, as you take it, a curse that her
mothers have known.

Or, maybe, the devil has pilfered her heritage, lending her soul to
his pards,

And set her free, soulless, and heartless, uncared-for, to struggle
and suffer alone.

Still she's just as the Gods, in their wisdom have made her—it may be
they've made her for you!

For, somehow, she only can cheer you, by treating you royal and
good!

She could not be false, for it isn't her nature, but ever she's gentle
and true!

And always you know she is making you love her—she always has
understood.

She blesses your weakness, forgets your intrusion, forgives what is
black in your soul!

She would go to her ruin, if given the word! She scarcely could
venture too much!

She pays every reckoning ever you bid her, and pledges her faith on
your goal,

And goes to her doom, unrewarded, unloved, for the grief that you
bade her to touch!

So say we too much of the woman we meet, because she is errant and surly ;

Her heart may be whimsical, laugh at tradition, be vanitie, shrew or a sprite !

But forget not the devil, who games for madonnas, and conquers—he conquered her early—

Though little he gained but the doom of a woman, whose virtue he scattered to flight !

For there's ruin abroad if the devil has won, and the curse of his toil is completed,

Though lover forgives all the loved one's offenses, if loved one be noble at heart ;

Forget then a past, though damnably desolate—why need its pains be repeated,

When wisely it's well to be scholarly lover, though distance has borne you apart ?

PEBBLE OR WAVE

Life is only what you make it: If you want to be a pebble,

All you need to do is just to seek the throng ;

But you will not win the music of a herald's piping treble—

Men will like you, but will not remember long.

You will pass away, as summer from the cotton ;

Men will lay a little flower on your grave ;

But the Gods ordain you soon will be forgotten—

Do you want to be a pebble, or a wave ?

Life is only as you take it: For the path is long and lonely,

And the pebbles are the margin of life's shore !

And the waves come breaking on them and they beat them sorely, only,

Only ceasing when the pebbles strive no more.

But the pebbles merely drift along, and falter ;

And they never rest a moment in the lave !

And the waves forever sweep them from life's altar—

Do you want to be a pebble, or a wave ?

RUINS OF A CONVENT

Yonder lie the ruins, where a stately palace
Reared its lofty columns to the blazing, bitter sun,
Crumbled into fragments: even as they that raised a chalice
And drained a glowing health within its corridors to one
A myriad of hearts adored, (Whose heart ignored the loves they said,
And pledged to hold a chastened self, and scorn the life they led.)

Gardens lie about it, and the desert mountains
Wall the cloistered places from the wistful winds in flight;
Other walls enclose it, that in falling filled the fountains,
Where hearts were prone to sophistry and dream in summer night.
No more the fountain songs resound; no more the lyric waters play:
Time, like a tyrant, sweeps the pride of fondest hands away.

Dreaming in the moonlight, where the ghostly gloaming
Paints a deep oblivion on a day long past and dead;
Solitary figures tread the dreamways, wont for roaming;
Solitary voices say the loves their youths have said;
And every figure—every face—it seems is touched and made to glow!
Yet death has said their requiem: Life is but dream, we know.

Over crumbled ruins, where the silence wreathes them,
Figures, forms, and faces the corridors held dear,
Wander in the fretful airs, and dimming shadow sheathes them:
Songs arise and fill the gloom; yet bring to me a tear
Of dim regret for one so rare, whose precious charms I never knew,
And yet whose memories are so fair, I know her heart was true.

THE HEART OF A DOUGLASS

(Why Charlefoux Drank Whiskey)

Come away to Old Dominion, where the birds forever sing.
Find the valley of the Stuart, when the wilderness was king.

They were sitting at a table in the silence of the Post:
It began across the toddies: Charlefoux had said a toast.

John McLoughlin turned to Douglass with a compromising air;
Raised his goblet: "Dinna ken but what ye luv the lassie, there!
Just aboot it—tell me, laddie; is it so, or say ye nay?"—

"What think ye?" retorted Douglass; but his face was turned
away.

"Did I bring ye here from Lanark for this lass to win your heart?
Listen, laddie; is it over? must our journeys lead apart?

Can't ye give a wurr'd o' comfort to the wan that's proud o' you?"—
Douglass sipped his glass in silence: He was watching Charlefoux.

Charlefoux was drinking whiskey—not a common thing for him!
He had raised his glass to Douglass, and his lips were at its brim:
"Sure t'ing, Doctoire Joan, 'e lof 'er; 'ow could 'elp lof such a lass?
See! I dreenk to mek heem happy!" Charlefoux had drained his
glass.

Douglass nodded, laughing lightly; Charlefoux cheered loud with
glee.

John McLoughlin sipped his toddy; then he added, "Waal, ye see,
It's the Honor o' the Company—O' course ye understand!
There's na host o' women here, lad, though it is a British land."

Charlefoux had turned from laughter to the Doctor's hardened face.
It was dawn; none else were stirring, save these three, within the
place.

Loons were screaming on the river, but of these they reckoned not:
At a glance of John McLoughlin, minor parts were all forgot.

“Ready, Charlefoxf?”—The Doctor glanced toward the Iroquois.

“Oui, oui, Doctoire Joan, oui, oui, sir!” Charlefoxf was flushed with joy.

“Then prepare to make the journey!” Charlefoxf was out the door.

“Oui, oui, sir!” he chattered, gaily, singnig off toward the shore.

“Oh, it’s morning on the river!” They could hear the fellow sing.

“Oh, it’s morning on the river!” And the echoes seemed to cling.

“Oh, it’s morning on the river; It’s a fond adieu, ma friends;
An’ away we go forever down the trail that never ends!”

“He is always such a jester!” Douglass spoke of Charlefoxf.

“Always happy as a baby—never saw him mad, did you?”—

But McLoughlin shook his toddy: “So it’s Nelia, then, ye love?”
Douglass pushed aside his goblet, and was reaching for his glove.

“I remember,” smiled the Doctor, “How she watched you when ye came.

Conolly’s a Celt—he tells us; Nelia burns with crimson flame;—

But she’s every inch a princess, an’ her father is a man!

Lad, she’s fit for any Douglass: win the lady, if ye can!”

Conjured visions danced in Douglass of his days along the rills.

Nelia! she, the factor’s daughter! here among these lonely hills!

Tender years had kept her merry! Father love had made her true!
And her silver songs outrivalled even those of Charlefoxf.

“Lad, ye say ye have ambitions! aye thy’re food for manly dream!

Waal, we’re goin’ down the Stuart: Look, it’s mornin’ on the stream.

But we’ve room for one companion, if ye have a wurd to say!”—

Douglass flushed with glöwing color, brushed his glove, and looked away.

Douglass smiled, and faced the Doctor, but he had not yet replied.

Charlefoxf sang in the distance, down along the riverside.

And a smile of understanding lighted up the Doctor’s face.

Yet their lips broke not the silence: It was very still, that place.

“We are going on a journey!” Douglass clutched the Doctor’s hand. Chasms that once had yawned between them with a golden bridge were spanned.

“Aye! ’Tis far—a lonely journey—would ye have a comrade, lad?” Douglass harder gripped, and nodded, for his heart was very glad.

At their side a door pushed open: Conolly stood there, alone. Nelia’s father! Greetings passed; yet there was sorrow in their tone.

Douglass heard a step behind him: On his eyes, a tender hand: It was Nelia: she was laughing! Glimpses—all could understand.

“Will ye love her, lad, and keep her?” Conolly had felt the sting. But the honor of a Douglass is the honor of a king:

“Aye! I will, sir!” clamored Douglass, “for it means the world to you.”—

From the woods along the river came the song of Charlefoix.

Conolly could say no further, but a glance that seemed to pass Brought to those within the Post why Charlefoix had drained his glass.

“She is willing,” said the factor, “And I know you’ll be her friend: She is yours through Love’s dominion—may your journey never end!”

WISDOM IS LOVE

Thread ye the deserts, and sail the far seas,
Clamber the peaks, where the purple mists cling—
List to the brooklet and hark to the bees;
Love is their king!

Sweat in the city, in industry’s pale—
Follow the lights where their revels allure—
Love is the pleasure that never shall fail—
Love shall endure!

Scan with the least, and scoff with the best;
Seek from the sands to the planets above—
Life, without love, is a lie, and a jest!
Wisdom is love!

THE LOVE OF ADVENTURE

Give us the wave and the running tide,
The dangerous shoal, where the wind is free,
And the windswept dune,
Where the summer moon
Lends solace to the restless sea.

We vowed to be weary of earth's wild way,
Craving the sea, where the mad waves toss,
Spurning the shore
For the trade-wind's lore,
Beneath the boding Southern Cross.

So seaward we sailed from the sunlit bay
Where a storm-swept haven braves the west,
And a gleaming sail,
And a sunset gale,
And a gull at wing, set our souls at rest.

For the golden glamour of romance rides
On the billowy crest of every wave,
Where a hero sleeps
In the chartless deeps,
With only the foam to mark his grave.

And the sea is a harbor of refuge,
If the heart be prest, and suffer sore;
And the restless wastes
But lend us grace—
O give us a sail, and we seek no more!

AGAINST THE WIND

The wind is hot, and burns the face;
The desert glitters bright;
A suffering spirit haunts the wastes—
I wish for rest, and night!
The cattle drift and break their ranks;
Their flames look drawn, and bare;
Their skins sag from their gaping flanks,
Their heads droop with despair.

And so across the burning lands
We follow herds that mourn—
Is this some realm that God's dear hands
Forsook, and left forlorn?
Far off a happy herder sings—
I feel the voice has sinned;
Man always does forbidden things!
Life rides against the wind.

EVENSONG

Softly and sweetly across the evening hills
Her tender voice complains to me,
Like the lonesome music of summer rills—
A tender, plaintive plea.
I hear her singing, and so into my heart
A loving, longing memory steals
As fond as the carol her blithe lips impart
In lonely, ling'ring peals.

Her voice is lonely: it seems within her breast
A humble touching hunger wells;
And I love her song for the sweet behest
Each fondled accent tells.
O lonely singer, afar across the eve,
Complain no more thy woe to me;
Hast thou lost a friend? Yet why dost thou grieve?
I lost a love at sea.

URBA MORBA

Waking so restless, what village in its slumber knew such peace?—

Its silver spires of smoke from myriad chimneys rise;
The noises of the streets in giddy lulls find ease;
A misty moon hangs low in shimmering skies;
The streets in silver threads inweaving and abroad do go;
No vagrant traveler dims their sheen of light;
No longer do cathedral bells chime low;
No spirit—not a soul!—abroad, this magic night!

Whence, traveling forth beneath the summer moon,
Hath even the spirit of this sacred village sped?
Whence, drifting forth some haunting afternoon,
Have fared the souls that once these manses tenanted?
And they who labored here to rest once more,
Gnawed by some sorrow, with a frown upon their face,
Waste in their grief, as withering reed-raped shore—
The gable-nesting swallows take their place.

Ah! All was bright that day! This fond retreat
Withheld some sorcery within its lonely lanes;
And with the unhushed patter of children's feet
Mingled a minstrelsy of laughter's glad, sweet strains.
Perhaps some soul, bereft of tender cheer
Found solace here, as I, when night was still,
Sighing for some forgotten yesteryear—
Yet now, no human heart! no human will!

TRUTH

Come! Stand with me a while!
Conquer with me, or fail!
Strip ye your soul of guilt and guile!
Gird ye my worthy mail!
Steel your heart for the fray!
Rally with heart and hand!
Learn ye to sway! Ye are more than clay!
Pledge for my goal and stand!

Speed from the festal throng!
Face ye the turbid field!
Trample the legions and ranks of wrong!
Come! Grip your hilts! nor yield!
Loud be your battle-cry!
Bold with my legions press!
Lift emblems high! Ye must stand or die!
I may not bid you less!

Clash with the stinging steel—
Foemen are nought to you!
Sing in the splendor of lust ye feel,
The heat that thrills you through!
Laugh to the worthy Gods!
Swear ye could die, if right!
Ignore the odds! Ye are more than clods!
Come! Stand with me and fight!

A SONG OF LABOR

Builders, O Sons of Men, spilling with youth, and lust,
Ye who are kindred to starling, breath of the Gods on dust,
Born of the loam ye have trampled, moulded at fate's own will,
Weaving your woof at the world's white roof—know ye must labor
still!

Toilers, O Sons of Men, wresting with bond and chain,
Leashed at the withering furnace, blinded with blearing pain,
Steeled by the loads ye have laden, serving your master's will,
Ye are but sands in the Gods' swift hands—know ye must labor
still!

Singers, O Sons of Men, blithely your songs ye sing—
Clutching for epical grandeur, up from the dusks they spring;
Know ye the songs that lie hidden, wiling to heed your will?
Ye must be meek till ye learn to speak—know ye must labor still!

Dreamers, O Sons of Men, flamed with a fancied youth,
Ye who have pondered in secret, scanning the dust for truth;
Loved ye the things ye imparted? Know ye the Gods' sweet will?
Ye are the hopes of a world that gropes—know ye must labor still!

Masters, O Sons of Men, sorely we rend the gates;
Laugh though ye will, we could crush you, raging with ancient hates;
Let a dead past lie forgotten—ours be a builder's will!
Shapen of sod, in the grace of God, know we must labor still!

LOVE AMONG THE MAGNOLIAS

Sweet, loving lips, that wait for me,
Be patient—I shall not forget!
The tide is singing on the shore,
And all the night with dew is wet:
To shore I come from storm and sea,
To leave no more!

Soft, silken cheeks, flush not thy deeps,
For soon my lips shall fondle thee
And leave an ivory-hued impress;
But linger only quietly,
As though nearby a wakeful goddess sleeps
In sweet distress.

Bright eye, that sparkles to the moon,
Dispel the love-expectant gleam
That seeks repose within thy wells;
I bring love's pearl in ships of dream,
An argonaut to thy lagoon,
To wreathe sweet spells.

Keep not strange fires and loathe the hours,
But wait my call, and dream of me;
I come unbidden, and my argosy
Sails to thy haven and to thee,
For love's sweet guiles amid the swaying bowers,
By life's rough sea!

ALONE WITH THE DEAD

Resound no more, O surging foam, but mourn for her thy woe:

With solemn beat thy dirges low be said!

Let gorgeous sunsets wreath their garland glow

For her, the beauteous, whom death doth know,

More beautiful than dead.

Once was no song along thy wastes too sweet for her to sing,

Nor vagrant wind too fond in its caress;

Yet nine days dead she lies, a tortured thing,

Abeach, where thou didst dare to fling

Her dross in helplessness.

And I with plaintive sorrow broken bend upon the sand,

Life's cast-up wreckage! O, how lone to part,

O, Sea, from one I loved, yet thou loved more; whose hand

I kiss; who, unresponsive, does not understand;

Whose passing breaks my heart!

SUNSET

Pale rifts of floating vapor tint the western blue

Touched crimson by the day-departing sun—

The remnant of a passing storm, this too

Bespeaks a perfect day that has begone.

Pale lights aspire and flare that weirdly glow, and, dim,

Seem pouring out a hint of joyous ease.

What harbinger are they? of storms to come?

Or sunny days, to die, as this, in peace?

When has departed this whose gorgeous cheer and calm

Made men who saw feel wondering and odd?

A faint mysterious light falls on a balm

And one more day has gone to meet its God.

JASON LEE

Eastward from wild Pacific's tides
A messenger rode through the evening light
Along the desolate mountainsides
In the hurry and haste of a sudden flight!
Crushing the sob that stirred his breast
With his tender love for all mankind;
"Give us the law!" had the tribes exprest—
But a horseman rode behind.

Keen in his thoughts were memories
Of the friends he had left at the western shore—
Back of him lay the haunts of peace;
The martial plains lay stretched before!
His but to ride, nor heed the cost!
His but to gain, to feeling blind!
Loved ones would suffer, if goal were lost—
But a horseman rode behind.

Swift to the saddle, and swift to the trails;
Up to the hills, down vales beyond!
Dust clouds wreathed him like silken veils
Of sacred smoke from a conjuror's wand.
Gay were the hopes did his dreams amuse—
Bore him to eastward, his heart resigned,
Uncomforted by cheerful news—
Yet a horseman rode behind.

Threading the plains like a restive gust
Of skelter-wind, on mischief bent,
Hidden betimes in the swirling dust
That wreathed him 'round with merriment,
Often he dreamed of the sturdy west,
And the factor's house where he last had dined—
Yet, "Eastward Ho!" was his endless quest—
And a horseman rode behind!

Come by night to Kansas' stream,
Where the lights of a fortress sparkle gay!
Memory flits like a listless bat,
And he thinks of a loved one, far away.
Deep in his bosom a memory yearns,
And he thinks of a cottage, eglantined,
Where the flame of another fireside burns,—
But a horseman rode behind.

Out of the dusk, sweet thoughts of old,
In calm procession drifted by,
In a tender vision of joy untold,
That flashed as fretful fires that vie.
A woman's figure, gracious, prim,
Caressed by a zephyr, western-wined,
Came into his dreams to gladden him—
But a horseman rode behind.

And he thought a child perhaps had come
Like a blessing of heaven to pay his woe,
For the anxious hours he had suffered dumb
On the danger trails that men must go.
He thought of a curly-headed boy,
With a lisping, girlish grace combined;
And his heart was flushed with a sudden joy—
But a horseman rode behind.

Then out of the night, a stranger calls,
Weary and worn from the rugged trails,
Come with a message to fortress walls,
With a lip that quivers, a heart that quails.
Into the east, and out of the west,
In a tender tie of love entwined,
Fell unsaid sorrow on the wanderer's breast—
For a horseman rode behind!

The horseman's face was painfully still—
He was broken, and seemed distress;
"We buried her there on the little hill,"
He said—"With her babe at her breast!"
Over the fort crept a silence cold,
And the weary wanderer's heart grew blind—
For grief untold is a horseman's bold,
If a horseman rides behind.

A LAMENT

Had I but sung the sullen joy my errant childhood knew,
Perhaps I had expressed the soul of music and the spheres;
Yet, as it is, I sing of grief, and sordid things to rue,
And where I might have sung of heaven, I sing, alas! of tears.
'Twere but a jest 'twixt grief and joy, a smile 'twixt sigh and song,
A silver cloud 'twixt sun and rain, a star 'twixt day and night.—
Ah, had I sung the things I ought—a lusty lay, and strong—
Perhaps I had not sung in vain, and might have found delight.

Had I but tracked the starbeam hope that beckoned me afar
Perhaps it were the infinite rewarded all my quest;
Yet in my woe I sing of death, and tortured things that are,
And where I might have found my God, I tarried not, his guest.
Yet why deplore the might have been, when brighter things may be,
For blest and golden destinies may sentinel the years!—
O let me sing no more of grief, but joy that lends a glee;
And then, perchance, I'll make you gay, and wash away your tears.

"A LAMP TO THEIR FEET"

I have waited at my window ; I have seen you passing by ;
I have scanned you from my eerie ; I have lured you with my eye !
 Ye have sought me, ye have bought me,
 Ye have scourged me, ye have scorned ;
Yet I am the things ye taught me !
I am all the tears ye brought me !
I am all wherewith ye fraught me
 Lest your dearer ones had mourned.

Ye have kissed me in my sorrow, when your kisses were as flame !
Ye have borne your gold to bless me—in the flush of pride ye came !
Ye have lied to me, cajoled me ; I have lured you for my prey !
And your stain fell on my bosom, and was never washed away !

I, a puppet in your fingers, coy and simple, blithe and cold !
Half-a-curtain at my window, and the curse of me—your gold !
Painted lips, and mirthless laughter, tortured kiss, and lying love !
What know I of God and heaven, or the precious things thereof ?

Not for me your recognition, when your dearer ones are by !
They I taste the Flame to save ; ah, what care they for such as I ?
Not a mother-love to thrill me ! Not a husband heart that cheers !
Ah, ye laugh to see me mourning—aye, ye jest to see my tears !

Ye have spurned me in your temples ; aye ! and yours ye love so free !
God is good to those who love him—those who love him ! but to me ?
Ye I loathe, and ye who loathe me—ye I curse, and ye I blight—
Ye forbid me heed your temples—ye would tryst with me tonight !

I am waiting at my window—ye are coming through the mists.
I am smiling from my eerie ; I am wiling for your kiss !
 Ye have sought me, ye have bought me,
 Ye have scourged me, ye have scorned ;
Yet I am the things ye taught me !
I am all the tears ye brought me !
I am all wherewith ye fraught me
 Lest your dearer ones had mourned.

THE ANGEL OF LOST CAMP

Cunningham was an engineer, master of eight degrees;
Born with a silver spoon in his mouth, raised on his mother's knees:
Lost Camp got him at twenty-two, scrawny and weak and soft—
Gave him a swing, a flip, and a toss, and chucked him away in the
loft.

Cunningham sputtered a year in the mines, trying to get ahead—
Wanted to marry the Girl back home: loved her so much, he said!
Then he fell in the ways of Clarabelle, the only girl in the camp—
Clarabelle gave him the laugh; and so Cunningham called her a
scamp.

Clarabelle was the dance-hall jade—Everyone pities her style!—
Cheeks of rouge, and a glistening eye—livid lips to beguile—
Setting her lamp at the window there, smiling to those below!—
Everyone said she was passing fair—desperate men, you know.

Clarabelle teased him, and coaxed him to steal a bit of the Company
cash:

Cunningham went to the store at night, and cut his way through the
sash—

He filled a poke with a bundle of dust that would stagger a com-
mon fool;

Then he went to Clarabelle, and drank till he spun like a spool.

After his senses had gone for a swim, she troubled him for the dirt:
Robbed him, and rifled him, savings and dust, and tucked it away in
her skirt.

Took back the dust to the Company, and saw things right at the
store;

And loaded her sock with his savings, scowling he didn't have more.

When he awoke the next morning, Clara was waiting to see,
Laughing her eyes, there by the bar, watching him pay, in her glee.

Cunningham rose and staggered around, wincing at every jar,
Then toppled away and across the room, and sided up to the bar.

“Mornin’, shir, Clara!” lisped Cunningham; “Ain’t she a peach of a djay?

Makes me shink of Arkanshaw, an’ tshe fieldsh of new-mown hay—

Shay, you’re an’ angel—shure shum shtyle; Proud of you, too, By Heck!”—

But Clarabelle stepped to Cunningham’s side, and her arm went ’round his neck.

“Pack up your things,” he heard her say—“Lost Camp isn’t your place.

Everyone knows the things I have done—staying here means your disgrace;—

Kiss the little old girl for me! Go, now—back to the fold!

So long! No—Never mind the change. You might have lost your gold!”

SEA LOVE

Oh, I loved a fisher-lass! who loved so well?

But she loved a landsman, who seaward would dwell.

She pledged him her love, and he touched her fair lips;

And they set for the sea on the frailest of ships!

O, the billows have claimed them—they dwell side-by-side

On a coraly reef in the sad tropic sea—

Fate laughed wierdly at her, my ill-to-do bride;

And the years since are many and bitter to me!

Yet where she may be does not sadden me now!

For I loved none but her, and she turned off my vow;

But I see her fair figure in each flash of spray

Till, a grandeur of madness, she dances away.

Yet I yearn for the strife where the hurricane hastes

Down lonely lagoons, by the sad tropic sea,

As the windfifes go piping, along the gray wastes,—

“Oh, the long years are many and bitter to me!”

ON SWEET BRIAR TRAIL

Yes, I suppose you would blame me; but what is a woman to do?
Love for the gold, and the title? Worship, when Gods are untrue?
Turn from the freedom that bore her to the bondage and tether of
Kings?
Oh, I presume some would like it; but I have no heart for such
things!

To me, there was no one but Jim—I had known him since first he
wore jeans!
Always as gay as a jester was he, riding the range ere his 'teens!
Law, we were always together, galloping down with the gale;
For the open is grand as a palace on Sweet Briar Trail.

We went through the schooldays together; the same books taught us
to write;
The same basket carried our dinners; we took the same trail home at
night;—
I suppose we were the same in our grudges, though but little we
knew of such things;
And we had the same notions of honor—as noble an honor as kings'!

And so we were married—remember? Out under the cottonwood
trees!
The ranch-boys had come in for dinner; the parson had come out to
please!
No, we had no champagne, but cider, galore, and the boys were
happy as we;
And when it was over we kissed there: I kissed Jim, and Jim kissed
me.

We started out life in a cabin, where the cracks were as big as the
doors;
But we patched all the holes up with shingles, and put some new
boards in the floors.
Quite needless to say, I was happy with Jim! You could see it for
more than a mile!
Why, he never had told me he loved me—but I knew it each time
he would smile!

Supposing you loved such a fellow—My love was a passion for Jim!
Would you leave him and marry a noble? Or would you just tarry
with him?

Perhaps some would go with the noble; but, really, you never can
tell!—

So Jim found a stranger with manners; and the stranger—well,
simply just fell!

They came to the door in a gallop, and the stranger went under his
roan.

He whimpered and whined like a baby! Law, his hands were as soft
as my own.

We bandaged him up— rather, “hup,” as he said—and trundled
him off to the straw,

Where he told us a story of London, remittances, and the Law.

A stranger, indeed! His title, quite long! Some money from home,
every week.

He prated of handicaps, bally cafays—his drawl like a calf in a creek!
Had traveled abroad; was an Oxford A. B., and sometime a fellow to
Kings—

But Sweet Briar never goes crazy, and pays little heed of such
things.

It might be the firelight, though possibly not, but he got a glimpse of
my face;

And nothing would do but he must have a kiss, before he got off of
the place.

He teased, and cajoled, but I kept mighty close—I had no kisses
for him;

For a puncher is good as a noble, and I loved a puncher named Jim!

You of course understand that it got on my nerves, and I felt like a
coyote at bay.

He showed me some gold, and his favorite ring, and asked me to take
him away.

I could not help laughing, though really it was a deplorable sort of
a mess!

But the stranger—Well, he was just silly—had never known better,
I guess!

Up, early next morn, Jim was off to the range, and would not be back for the day.

I hated a thought of a sight of the noble, but Law! I could not get away.

Who would see to the calves, and the rest of the chores? Nobody! The rules never fail!

It is twenty-five miles to a neighbor, on Sweet Briar Trail.

The stranger got up in a humor—a headache—a backache—and so I put him down for exhibit; and Law! he was surely a show!

Just put such a man for a day on the range: Why, any puncher can see

He is not worth his beans as a watchdog—and here he was, asking for me.

I suppose it is nature for women to preserve what is dearest to them. At least we will do it forever, and die for it, flower, and stem.—

I looked at the noble, and he looked at me, and we stared like a couple of fools—

But I hustled him something for breakfast, and set by a couple of stools.

Law, no! Not the breakfast he wanted! But more than the breakfast, a kiss!

I suppose that the noble was crazy—I have thought so from that day to this!

But the first thing I knew he was holding my arms, and I struggled to dodge the disgrace:

I grabbed up a poker, and burnt him, and left a black mark on his face.

I told him to go, and he slunk like a dog—I even must saddle his roan. He wanted a kiss as I lifted him on—he could not mount the saddle alone.

But I latched close the door till he got up the trail, and the hills hid all traces of him;

Then did up my chores and waited and waited, till evening, for Jim.

Jim came home that night with a stare in his eyes, and his face was wrinkled and drawn.

He asked me, where was the noble? but I told him the fellow was gone.

He said he had riddled a wolf in the hills, and found in the teeth of the thing

A bit of a man's twisted finger, and the noble's favorite ring.

I cried, for I knew it was over; and deeply Jim mourned at the joke. But the lord had his tomb in the mountains in a place grave never was broke.

You ask me why I have tarried, and lingered my life in a vale!—

Well, a puncher is good as a noble on Sweet Briar Trail.

A SONG OF THE PLAINS

Freedom is ours, and a merry song;

Life, and the long, long trail;

Laughter that lifts; and a heart so strong,

Riding before the gale!

What care we for the snows that fall?

What care we for the pain?

Nought cheers our hearts like the winds that call,

Galloping down the plain.

Plenty to eat, and a place to sleep!

Hope, and a place to roam!

Nothing to fret us, nor need to weep—

Under a bough, our home!

Ours is liberty, given rein,

Youth, and a broncho true!—

Give us a trail on the windy plain—

We ask no more of you!

Over our heads, the boundless skies!

Under our hoofs, the sand!

Over the ridges! along the rise!

Galloping down the land!

What care we for the winter fears?

Wind, or the driving rains?

We are the monarchs of all the years,

Riding across the plains!

THE HILLS OF THE COLUMBIA

The winds are quiet on the hills, tonight;
Pale flames of ghost-like glare where sunset fades;
Along the scarlet chasms, purple light
Wreathes elfin fancies on the palisades;
Upon the east, a grayish glow expires;
A star glows out alone; the far sheep cry;
Toward the west, the evening's ruddy fires
Lap like tongued serpents at the western sky.

Below my feet, beneath my trail that clings,
Faint sheep-forms shimmer on the lowland brown;
Against the canyon-side a ripple sings
And breaks to sudden laughter, leaping down.
Far out beneath me lies a pleasant field,
Touched with the dullness of a vanished sun;
Turned by a share to fallow and to yield,
Where mist-lights frolic when the day is done.

Upon the fields, the ghastly haycocks stand,
Like sudden spectres, wakened in surprise;
An eagle wails its note unto the land;
The world grows dark; the day fades from my eyes.
Yet, with the coming of the evening hush,
The stygian stillness, as the sheep-cries cease,
The mist-hung chasms warble with a lyric thrush,
That calls in darkness from its precipice.

And so comes night; and so comes joy, and rest;
A moon against the east, where dawn shall be!
A last faint glimmer of the sunset west,
And lonely darkness on the hills with me.
And so I stand; and so I dream of old,
Of dear, forgotten things, that come to me,
And light the chasms of my dreams with gold,
And flame the garnered harvests of my memory.

ON THE CLIFF PATH

I heard him at dawn on the highroad,
When the mists trailed dim on the sea;
And the harvesters toiled down the byroad,
And the wings of the wind were free—
The drifting clouds
Draped the heads with shrouds;
And a song blew over the lea,
And a spirit was singing on my road
And it bore a rare pleasure to me.

An albatross winged in the barrows,
And a fragrance spilled on the lea,
And the creeling and crying of sparrows
Came up from the breakers to me,—
The ragged reef
Was a silver sheaf
As it bathed in the jovial sea;
And the seagulls went glinting in farrows,—
Where the songs of the shore echoed free.

And swiftly the swallows went flying,
And the bay was a fancy set free,
As the crimson of dawning was dying,
And romance danced over the sea;
Across the rifts
Of the scattered drifts
A song echoed over the lea—
And it wakened my bosom to sighing,—
Yet it bore a strange gladness to me.

IN THE LANE

Old house, wold house, open wide your door,
Let a flame o' baskin' light come straying down the rain—
A dear light, a cheer light, to gladden me once more,
And wake anew my dreams of yore, singing up the lane.

Och, singing up the lane I am to find my little house again,
My own house, my lone house, the house where I was born,
To nestle in the tansy bloom, beneath the willow boughs again,
The dear boughs, the cheer boughs, where thrushes sing o' morn.
Not a whit o' shame I had! Just a bit o' fame I had,
Dear fame, cheer fame, a glowing fame so rare!
But never shall I quest the wine nor seek a wan carouse again,
And never break my vows again, and never know a care.

Singing up the lane I am to roam the misty dell again,
The far dell, the star dell, the dell o' silence sweet!
To skelter down the heatherside, with laughter like a bell again,
A dear bell, a cheer bell, my olden joys to meet!
My rare joys, my fair joys, the kiss o' tender hope again,
Arm in arm along the brae, and singing in a task,
A gay task, a play task, a wander down the slope again,
Until to cot I grope gain—a rest is all I ask!

Och, singing up the lane I am to kiss those lips o' rose again,
Those fair lips, those rare lips, those lips o' love and joy!
To wander by the dewy shore when heather blossom blows again,
The dear shore, the cheer shore! I loved it as a boy!
Not a whit o' shame I had! Just a bit o' fame I had,
Sweet fame, meet fame, a smiling fame so fair!
But never shall I burst the leash, nor loiter in the tows again,
Nor curse my stent o' woes again, nor claim a rover's share.

Singing up the lane I am to greet a heart o' gold again,
A love heart, a dove heart, a heart o' hope that's true;
To say a gentle word o' tryst, and roam the paths o' old again,
The dear paths, the cheer paths, with overhead, the blue!

The high blue, the sky blue, the silver-crested dawn, again,
Arm in arm across the bush to frolic by the sea,
The glad sea, the sad sea, that sweeps old glammers on again,
To frolic by the bawn again, with one so dear to me.

Old house, wold house, take me to your rest!
Let me wander, by the hearth, in fancy, far and near,
A kind hearth, a pined hearth, and linger on the west,
And clutch unto my lonely breast one I hold most dear.

SUCCESS

I crush the dreamer on his wheel of dreaming;
I mock the sophister, yet want for creed;
I blind the hope of weakling with my gleaming;
I scorn the hoarding miser for his greed;
I curse the haughty; I adore the holy;
I blast the craven souls that cringe and lack!
I lay my fondest laurels on the brow of lowly,
Yet torture pride upon my torture-rack.

I come by soft degrees by stern regaling,
Like scarlet dawn that scatters earth with day;
I pour around the light of hope-unfailing,
For him who would adventure on my way.
I steel men's hearts with lust to bear their sorrow!
With cruel thorns I scourge the feet of dream;
Yet in my smiling laurels crown the morrow—
A fond reward for following my gleam.

Upon the threshold, then, of my adventure,
Ye who would slave you well to win my prize,
Lift up thy colors, deaf to jest and censure!
Behold the glare I flaunt before your eyes!
Ignore the toil; the soul is strong for rending!
Renounce the pleasure; mirth turns dross with ease!
Immortal fame lies at my pathway's ending!
Toil for my goal; ambition holds the keys!

THE VILLAGE BEE

I met a village bee, one time, most winsome and demure,
As comely as the lilac sweet and rare;
She was stately as a seraph—rather stunning, I am sure!
Her countenance a fay would wish to share.
So I says, "O amorata, lady-arch of all my dreams,
Couldst thou not bestow upon me one rare blessing of thy beams?"
But she scowls a bit remorseful, and frowns most cold at me,
And chaws her gum, and says, "Just twenty-three!"

Now her beak was like the lilac, and her lips were like the rose!
Her eyes were quite ridiculously blue!
But I though there was a blitheness in the habits of her nose,
And, thinks I, "Well, Charles, here's something nice for you!"
So I smiles a bit upon her, though smiles as well were sobs:
"Wouldst thou give me but a lock of wool? Thou hast the same in
gobs!"
But she darkens something heinous, and frowns like hully-gee,
And chaws her gum, and says, "Just twenty-three!"

As I say, her beak was lilac, and a daisy, I confess,
And her face was most uncoloredly devout;
Her demeanor, something scrumptious, like the hanging of her dress—
She was spirited and charming, never doubt!
But her phiz is like a cabbage, and her profile like the kale,
And she has the spooks and goblins put to sleep for white and pale!
And she sure can frown remorseful, and proves the same to me,
And chaws her gum, and says, "Just twenty-three!"

Well, I takes her for a phantom, and I tracks her down the street,
Though indeed she is elusive as a wisp,
Till at last I gets her cornered, and she sure is honeyed meat,
So I starts the conversation with a lisp.

But her ways are cold and distant, as a drowsy brook that sings,
And she buzzes kind of wheezy, like the agile bee that stings,
And she stings me like an artist: "Go! find your mah," says she,
And chaws her gum, and says, "Just twenty-three!"

I was braver in a jiffy, for resistance makes it sport,
And I puts a word in crossways, fit to please;
For thinks I, "Here's opportunity, and here's a maid to court!"
(Love-at-first-sight is a funny old disease!)

So I ventures she is charming, and in fact she is a rage!
"O my lovely amorata; won't you tell me just your age?"
But she snarls a bit remorseful, and snuffles back to me,
And chaws her gum, and says, "Just twenty-three!"

I inquires about her family, if her folks were well at home,
And they still loved baby-nittles as they used;
If her narrow-minded daddy still was dusty in the dome,
Or had gained him sense to know he was abused?
But she glares a bit at me and says, "You ought not be alone;
Do not venture on the street again without a chaperone!"
And she scowls some more remorseful, and trudges down the lea,
And chaws her gum, and says, "Just twenty-three!"

Woe me! I am susceptible to ways and wiles of maids—
I love them, though they aren't up to snuff!
But I crown my amorata as the dowsiest of jades,
For she takes the grapes from all of them for guff.
And so, you may imagine how I must have felt that day
As she snuffles right particular, and wends upon her way—
"Better go and find your mah; you aren't wanted here!" says she,
And chaws her gum, and says, "Just twenty-three!"

THREE MEN OF THE SEA

Once on a time, there were three little men, three strange little men,
it is true,
Who dreamed every day in a land far away in a bower of blossoming
blue;
In a garden of dreams on the face of a cliff, with a strange purple
city below,
Where the shores go down from the misty town to the Ocean of
Long Ago.

These three little, strange little men each day went forth as the night
drew on,
And the day's last gleams lent flame to their dreams of the bliss of
the days long gone:
Of a childhood day, and a day of glee, and a day of gladness, too;
And the golden joy of a careless boy in a land where dreams come
true.

Said one, "The sea is the wolf of God: its prey is the men of earth;
On the shoals they lie, and the surges cry in grief at the waters' mirth.
It beckons youth and rends his grace, and robs his soul of ease,
Till regret looms vast as his hopes go past; and that is the way of
the seas."

Said another, "The sea is a place of joy, and merriment there prevails,
When the mists arise to the gleaming skies, and a bark of silver sails,
For the fancy wanders abroad, unleashed, in the crimson sun's last
beams,
As I sit by the beach where the waves beseech, and cast my nets for
dreams."

And then spake the third little strange little man and his voice was
gentle and sweet:
"When the sea is fair its voice is prayer, enshrined at the mountain's
feet.
And the heart may find what joy it will, or regret, if that will
please;
But its tender voice bids me rejoice, and urges my soul to ease."

The sea upleaps, and the tide awakes, and dawn puts dark to flight,
Till the sun's mad quest of a golden west once more brings on the
night.

And the shoal laments and its wail goes forth, yet the sea-wind
bears a glee,

And the golden joy of a careless boy to the three little men of the
sea.

GOSPEL—ACCORDIN' TO GEORGE

Where the big hills bite the sky,
And the woodland chansons sigh,
Let me live, and let me die.

Out where none else cares to go,
When the winter-tempests blow,
And the purple chasms glow.

Seeking spots where none have been,
Wilds no man before was in—
That is where my Gods begin.

Maybe I am pagan; still
I would rather quaff my fill
Of religion from a rill!

So I break from toil and sweat,
City striving, city fret—
Find the mountains, and forget.

Plain religion—that is mine!
Life! A song! The trail! A pine!
Why lament? The hills are mine!

MY LITTLE PATH AND I

I have a quiet little path I follow through the woods,
Beneath a many a branch and bough, in many a crook and bend;
For oftentimes my spirit broods
And so, I seek these solitudes
To find the little path I love, and wander to its end.

A brook leaps down beside it from an overhanging ledge.
Its merry music fills the place with gay, enchanted noise.
It leads away into the sedge,
And lilies blossom at its edge—
My path forever leads me here; no wonder I rejoice.

The overhanging willow-boughs make dark my path in spots,
But elsewhere silver sunglow falls and filters on the green,
And fills dame Nature's flower-pots
With jonquils and forget-me-nots;
That wreathes a vernal garden where no hand save mine may glean.

On every side are quiet woods, the oak, the maple tree,
The tall, inspiring cottonwood, the ash tree, and the pine.
It makes a merry place to be,
Forever held in secrecy—
Unhallowed feet have never been upon this path of mine!

The noises of the city are faint and vague and dim—
I wonder how the wood has stayed unharmed by human hand;
For man will ever rend the limb
And what may dare to hinder him;—
Unless the wood awaited me, I cannot understand.

I love to wander here and dream amid the deep recess,
Where human voice may not disturb, and only bird is nigh;
And strive the wood's charade to guess,
And quest its hidden loveliness—
In this we find our pleasure, my little path, and I.

I often think if I could know the pleasure and the peace
That lingers in these solitudes, and revels by the shore,
 My soul would find a joyous lease
 And rid my thoughts of their unease—
If I could only know these truths, I should not ask for more.

The world may revel with their wealth, and spend it as they go—
May rot in sweating cities, where skill and genius vie;
 But we would rather dream, and oh!
 Would rather our sweet secrets know,
Than rule the world forever, my little path, and I.

THE LAST MUSICIAN

Lonely, alone, upon the last chill peak that gnaws the sky,
 I lude the symphony of solitude remote,
Lamenting my minstrelsy to wilds that sigh,
 Yet heed, nor know, my note.

Riven and rent by winds that wot not of their wandering course,,
 Whose clutching fingers strive upon my lyre,
I sing my triumph, ere a tempest's force
 Bids me no more aspire.

Up to the stars from glinting snow-clad hills and vales
 I mourn the dirge of worlds that long to sleep!
Remorseful at the cold, I brood me tales!
 I cringe at winds that weep,

Dreaming of summer worlds, the South, the smiling sun,
 The blatant equinox, the springtime thaw,
The desert autumn, where summer's glass is run
 In fate's eternal law.

Sadly my song lifts to the flaring northlights as they shine:
 I whine, I wail, I weep at tempest, fury-swirled!
I chant of primal strivings that resign—
 My deathsong of the world.

IN TEMPEST

I know not what the way of life will bring :
I only know that I must face the gale,
Braving wild waters, where mad billows fling
Their turbid mockery to my sail.
Yet irks me not whence Pilotage may spring,
If, when I draw to Doubt's tempestuous realm,
My craft shall be a sturdy thing,
And Faith be at the helm.

Or if to storm-tossed wreck-washed spar I cling,
Lost where the raging wintry waves assail,
I only know the joyous bells will sing
For those who live to tell their tale.
Yet irks me not when shattered wreck may rift,
Nor when my fervid destiny may call,
If on the turbid gale I drift
To haven, after all.

If in the trying hours whose sorrows bring
Into this heart of mine the scoffer's wail,
Faith's loving, loyal, tender comforting
Make strong anew my tattered sail :
Irks me but little to what buoy I cling
When in the gloom of doubt I find the light
And heart the haven's antheing
Adown toward the night.

Of if the bitter billows sorely sting
A shipwrecked fellow, and my wretched sail
Falls to his eye, and from the dark he sing
For aid, may I not flinch or fail :
For irks me not what journey-path be mine,
How fraught with tumult, harried, or distress,
If I may guide with aid divine
Some soul to faith's sweet rest.

I know not what the tide of death will bring :
I only know I pass within the pale :
I only know the bells of triumph ring
For those who weather through the gale :
Nor irks me when those distant chimes may sing
If, in the night of Doubt, I find Faith's star,
And hear the joyous welcoming
Across the harbor bar.

REQUIESCAT

Men there may dwell that would drone in a cell, pent in the walls of
a shrine :

Give me the open, the weird, wide hills, untethered, blithe, divine !

Mine be a cabin, with four stout walls, deep in the wilds, where
the snows sift down ;—

Cave, if thy will, in their rutted halls : O shackle me not to the
lazar town.

Others there are that would dream of a star, elysian meadow of
dreams :

Mine be a coign in the budding trees, when Springtime rills the
streams !

Mine be a pack, and a dream, and a song ; love and a jest, with a
hope in store ;—

Tread if they will through the sputter of stars : O give me the free-
dom—I ask no more !

Some there may be that would porphyry their graves till the dawning
of doom :

Mine be a cairn in the sleeping hills—a lonely rock, my tomb ;

Blanketed stark by the glittering frost, just at my headstone, a pine
to sway ;

Over me, mangers of star-bright cosmos, dusting the dreams of my
swinish clay.

THE WINDS OF LOVE

Hark! They are calling us over the world: road beneath, the blue
above;

Us they flush, and you they hush; but the call we know is the voice
of love!

We could hear them in the passes, when the stars were in the grasses,
While the Titans of the winter strove to rend her snowy nets,
As they carolled from the surges to the utmost peak that verges,
Where the pinetree sings its anthem, while a sleeping world forgets.

We could hear them 'round our campfires, while our reveries were of
trampfires,

Where no trail was cleft to guide us, yet we wandered on our way,
As their melodies came sighing in a primal song, undying,
That was born no man remembers when, but was through time for
aye.

We could hear them in the gloaming, and they set our whole souls
roaming

On the scarlet sounds and channels, where the ships of sunset sail,
Like a shorewind in the willows, sobbing lonely o'er the billows,
With the choral-throated breathing of the smother and the gale.

Lo, they fraught us, and they blest us! Ho, they caught us, and
caressed us!

Swept us upward, soul and fancy, for a journey on their wings!
And it's oh! the winds will kiss us, and the ones we love will miss us,
For we're back to find our mintrel in the silence where she sings.

Oh, it's back to lands of fancy, where the heart's a bird in tansy!

And it's back across the world again, with freedom, and the sky!
So good-bye to care and sorrow: we'll be free from them tomorrow!
For it's vagabonds of love we are, my little dog, and I.

Lo! they are calling us over the world, grass beneath, the stars above!
Us they hail, and you they rail; but the call we know is the voice of
love!

LASTUDE

And so my lute falls from my palsied fingers ;
 Its chords, re-echoing, fade dim away ;
Yet in my memory a chanson lingers,
 A fonder lude than human hand may play.

A symphony of mirth, of sphinx-like laughter,
 Portentuous of some mad soul's desire,
Flung answerless to night, whose stygian crafter
 Veils darkness ' round his forge of sunset fire.

Far though the hills, by boundless gaping ridges,
 The strains aspire, deepfraught with quenchless hope,
A wistful antheming, whose choral bridges
 Life's chasms to the wastes, where dead souls grope.

As I have sung, dear comrades, you have listened ;
 And if my wistful song has made you gay,
Ours be true comradeship till earth has mistened—
 Eternity for us is but a day.



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